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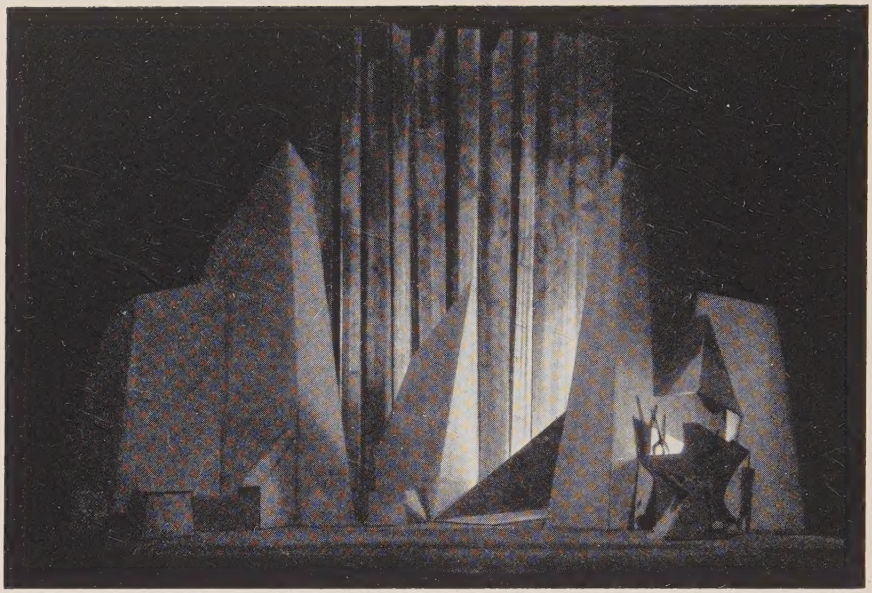

The Sunken Bell by Gerhart Hauptmann. Act III. The Play House, Cleveland. Designed and directed by Frederic McConnell. Reality in terms of soaring geometric designs. Realism forced to its irreducible minimum. A deserted glass-works in the mountains near the snow fields. Mountain landscape, with peaks, moors, dense fir-woods. A precipitous descending slope. The rock forms a rude, pointed vault.

THEATRON

AN

ILLUSTRATED

RECORD

BY

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NEW YORK

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PREFATORY NOTE

In addition to those persons whose names are printed with the illustrations I desire to express my thanks to the following for kindly helping me with information or photographs: Portia Bartlett of the Chicago Junior League; Ruth W. Campbell of Greenwich Academy, Connecticut; C. I. MacColl of Christodora House, New York; Alice Gerstenberg of Chicago; Cloyd Head of the Goodman Theater, Chicago; L. A. Henry of Central High School, Minneapolis; Elizabeth Howe of Allegheny High School, Pittsburgh; Barbara G. Latin of Yale; Rosalie Manning of Lenox Hill Settlement, New York; Stokes McCune of the Players Club, Columbus, Ohio; Fannie W. McLean of the High School, Berkeley, California; Ashley Miller of the Heckscher Theater, New York; William Ziegler Nourse of Chicago; Elbertine A. Oakman of Lake Erie College; Charles F. Prickett of the Pasadena Community Playhouse; L. B. Reynolds of the University of California; John Allen Stewart of the North Shore Theater Guild; D. C. Stuart of Princeton; Bernard Szold of the Birmingham Little Theater; Mrs. Fenton Taylor of the New York Junior League; Perry M. Thomas of the University of Wisconsin; Lillian D.

Wald of Henry Street Settlement, New York; Margaret Maury Walton of Plays and Players, Philadelphia; Claude M. Wise of Kirksville Teachers College, Missouri; Mrs. R. M. Woodson of the Lynchburg Little Theater; Alexander Wyckoff of the Memphis Little Theater.

C. S.

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THEATRON

CHAPTER I

ON GOING TO THE THEATER

Why should anyone go to the theater?

I have just sat through the so-called all-star production of Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* with all its miscasting, its mistaken interpretation, its banal direction, its vaudeville business in the interview between Miss Hardcastle as herself and Marlowe. The audience—rather well-bred—refused to laugh at most of the obstreperous horse play; therefore very naturally it did not rise in a body and make for the emergency exits when the vilest of burlesque circle jokes were introduced. When Mrs. Hardcastle berates Tony Lumkin she exclaims, "I that have rocked you in your cradle."

But as Goldsmith wrote it that remark is in the middle of a speech, and is only the first half of a sentence. Yet—shame that it has to be reported—in this professional production, Tony retorts with, "Well, you wouldn't have used a coal scuttle, would you?"

The concluding half of Mrs. Hardcastle's sentence is, "and fed that pretty mouth with a spoon."

Unless my hearing and memory play me false the unconvincing Tony came right back with a laugh-getter about a shovel.

And a confirmed theater-goer repeats sadly, "Why should anyone go to the theater?"

In England I go to the play thirty-four times in six weeks, and echo the same query.

Or I remain cold through *Coquette* after the New York critics have wept themselves limp over it. Or I am dragged to the dullness of *Behold the Bridegroom.* Or I conscientiously cram into my mind plot, acts, and scenes of a gigantic production at the Century Theater, to sit

Photograph © Canfield & Shook

University of Louisville Theater.

amazedly as the acts and actions on the stage unfold themselves with no relation or little to the printed accounts of the play, and I—with a slight feeling of regret—witness the exaggerated reputation of a Professor Reinhardt dissipate into rather thin air. Then persons who saw his work in Europe two decades ago inform me that all he displayed on this continent belongs to a manner discarded by him some twenty years ago.

And again I wonder, "Why should anyone go to the theater?"

Photograph by Wooten and Moulton

The Playmakers Theater, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. This historic building, used originally to house the University Library and Ballroom, and later the School of Law, has been reconstructed and equipped as a permanent theater. The original folk plays produced here under the direction of Frederick H. Koch have made this playhouse one of the most famous in the country.

Photograph by Wooten and Moulton

The Playmakers Theater, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Additional side space on the stage is obtained by using the built-in proscenium frame.

Or I am assured by someone who has no doubt of his being in the know, that all I seek will be furnished by the perfect art of the Moscow Art Theater. I am promised perfection of realism and devotion to the geniuses of Russian drama amounting to religious fervor. Hope springs eternal—so with all the trust of a guileless child I behold the realism that provides at the rear of the stage flimsy borders that flutter in every breeze, realism that seems to consist only of having some jelly in a saucer and actual warm tea in a samovar. And devotion to genius amounting to religious fervor? I am not familiar with all the details of the dramas of the Russian gods, but I do know *Uncle Vanya*, having read it often and sat through rehearsals of it. And these worshipping Russian devotees lay hands even upon the masterpieces of their divine Chekov and change the first act of his sacrosanct drama. No longer is Act I set as he instructed, "A country house on a terrace. In front of it a garden. In an avenue of trees, under an old poplar. . . . A hammock is swung near the table." For economy's sake, doubtless, the same setting—"The dining-room of Serebrakoff's house"—serves for both Acts I and II.

And again I wonder why anyone should go to the theater.

The astonishing phenomenon is that in spite of all the dashed hopes and unrealized yearnings the people of Europe and of the Western Continent have been going to the theater from early Greek times until this very present day. And go they will in the dim and distant

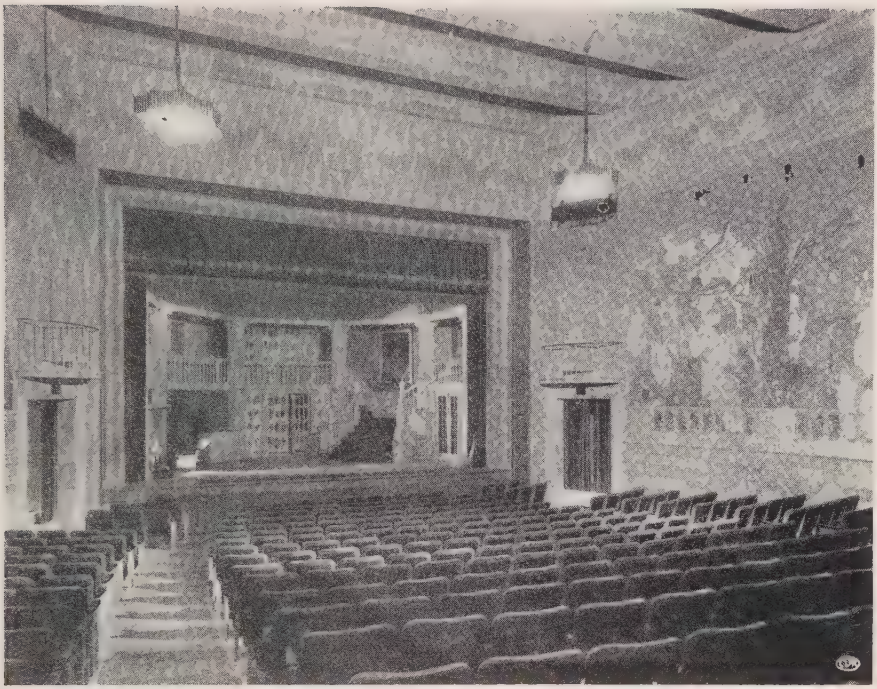
future. Troubled enthusiasts—troubled because of some local or temporary condition that displeases them—distribute questionnaires or adjure the newspapers, crying out in their despair, "What's the matter with the theater in America?" The only answer is that the theater in this land is doing quite nicely, thank you.

One city, a long distance from both New York and Chicago, has two theaters in which metropolitan successes that must make money in large quantities are housed. Yet at another, a renovated old playhouse outside the theater district, Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* played some six weeks, while in a reformed burlesque house, Bourdet's *The Captive*, quietly announced and temperately advertised, stretched its run from date to date until it lasted eight weeks. Miles from the center of that city a stock company (playing some thirty-six to forty weeks a year) offered such successes as *The Firebrand*. All of these are commercial theaters. At the playhouse or little theater, Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, scheduled for twelve performances, had its run extended to twenty.

In this one city, at least, there seems to be nothing the matter with drama.

The question would be more intelligent if it were worded thus: "In some sections of this country what is the matter with those persons who should constitute the audiences in the theaters?"

These persons seem to have deserted the commercial and professional theater of hoary tradition and old ma-



Photograph by C. D. Robinson

University Theater, Cornell. Directed by A. M. Drummond.
Setting for *Seven Keys to Baldpate*.

Photograph by A. E. Arnold

Pasadena Community Playhouse. Gilmor Brown, Director. One of the earliest adequately planned and equipped non-commercial theaters.

terials. Yet where there are courageous enthusiasts to furnish inspiriting and refreshing dramatic entertainment it has been discovered that these persons have not abandoned the theater—they have merely remained away from the town "op'ry" house, the academy of music, or the trust-owned temple of Thespis for the simple reason that on its stage they were not being offered what they most desired to see. That simple fact appears self-evident.

There is really no good reason for quarreling with an indisputable fact. There have been sweeping changes "on the road." A fair-minded person should bear no rancor against those actors and actresses, who having attained eminence and prestige in their profession, prefer living like established members of a community in or near the metropolis to dashing about the broad country after every stay of a week in a different hotel.

It is not a gracious thing, either, for dwellers in small towns to try to demand the "original New York cast" in every production that can be induced to display before them. Often they are fortunate in not seeing the "original New York cast;"—at any rate they see something—from the acting involved—quite as good. Perhaps better.

To prove this, let me cite an instance of a substitution in a cast before it left New York; a substitution that never caused a ripple of comment among critics; a substitution—I'll wager—that was not discovered by many of the large audiences that for months packed the theater to witness *The Trial of Mary Dugan.* Miss Jane Harding played the title rôle for some time. When I saw the play

only a casual glance at the program informed me that I was seeing not her but Miss Anna Kostant.

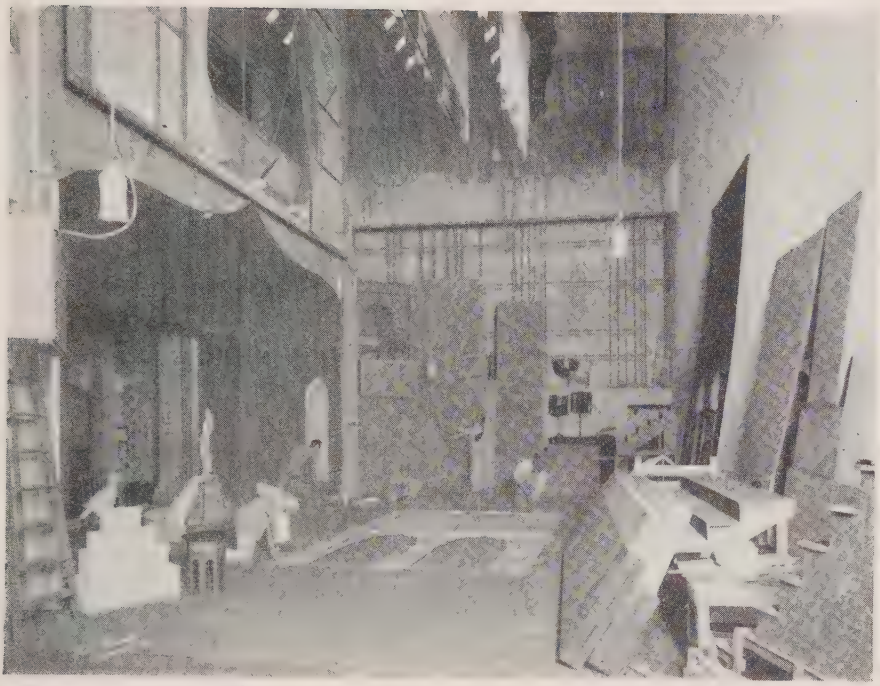
There are scores of dramas produced every season which could be adequately acted by several other casts—in fact, are so acted; yet the masses clamor for certain actors and actresses in identified parts. These claqueurs are only slightly interested—in spite of all their protesta-

Photograph by Walter Rosser

Little Theater, Birmingham.

tions—in drama and acting; they are seduced by personalities, personalities often advertized and boomed far beyond their legitimate influence and far above their manifest quality.

Resident stock companies, with or without visiting rotating leading men and women, are solving in many districts the vexed and vexing problem of local dramatic endeavor. Even summer resorts support repertory groups. One vacation resort in Maine is being used more and more fre-



Photograph by A. E. Arnold

Pasadena Community Playhouse. This may indicate that an adequate stage may replace a work room. Or it may indicate that a production taxes every resource a theater has. Here is shown nearly every phase of scene building.

The Attic Workshop. Carroll College, Waukesha, Wisconsin. Constructing the set for *You and I*.

quently as a try-out organization by commercial producers. Such instances merely enforce what was said a few paragraphs earlier: what is the matter with those persons who should constitute the audiences in the theaters? Let the audiences make themselves known; let them consistently patronize the management's offerings; it is the easiest matter in the world for the managers to continue the producing of plays if they are assured of sufficient patronage.

The reclaimed burlesque house already referred to was at first used for super-films or art films (whatever those terms may mean). Why then were films discontinued and real plays booked? Because owners and managers believed that there were potential patrons who would come to applaud plays of which they had heard but which they had not been able to see in that city, or plays for which they were not willing to spend $3.30 or for which they could not pay that sum.

If I remember properly *The Firebrand* did not travel after its closing in New York. Then let (as some of them quickly and wisely did) the stock companies throughout the country produce it. Thus even Mr. Shaw's *Saint Joan* has been produced by at least one stock company—that of the Bonstelle Playhouse in Detroit—with the costumes of the original production sent out from New York. Thousands of well-read persons yearned to see Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms.* Install an adequate company in a clean comfortable theater; charge small prices for the seats; and add to the training and delight of the theater-going public.

A second method of obtaining worthy dramatic entertainment is fostered by those enthusiasts, who—slightly more removed from the theater as a profession—repeat the dictum of Matthew Arnold: organize the audience. Surely this strikes one as being much saner advice than that at one time pressed upon us by a distinguished British expatriate who would have saved the theater (or perhaps it was only drama) by eliminating the actor. Had he selected a few of both sexes whom he desired to eliminate, thousands would have seconded his efforts, always provided that they could have added a short list of "pet pests" to his sweeping proscriptions.

Organize the audience. This feat, to early scoffers an impossible one, has been accomplished more successfully in the United States than in any other country. Audiences for opera seasons and symphony orchestra series have always been organized, mainly on the money payment basis; in all cases payment or guarantee long before a subscriber could be certain that he would like the programs. How often have civic committees of guarantors for a week of operas been bombarded with protests after the names of the operas have been finally published! How often the repetitions of "first time" entries during an orchestra series have made genuine music lovers groan and grit their teeth to hear it out merely for the sake of the art or because of civic pride.

Theatrical nucleuses may have been late in adopting this scheme of organization, but once they did adopt it, they rapidly perfected and disseminated it. The Wash-

Photograph by Eichler

Scene Building and Painting. Schuster-Martin School of the Drama. Cincinnati.

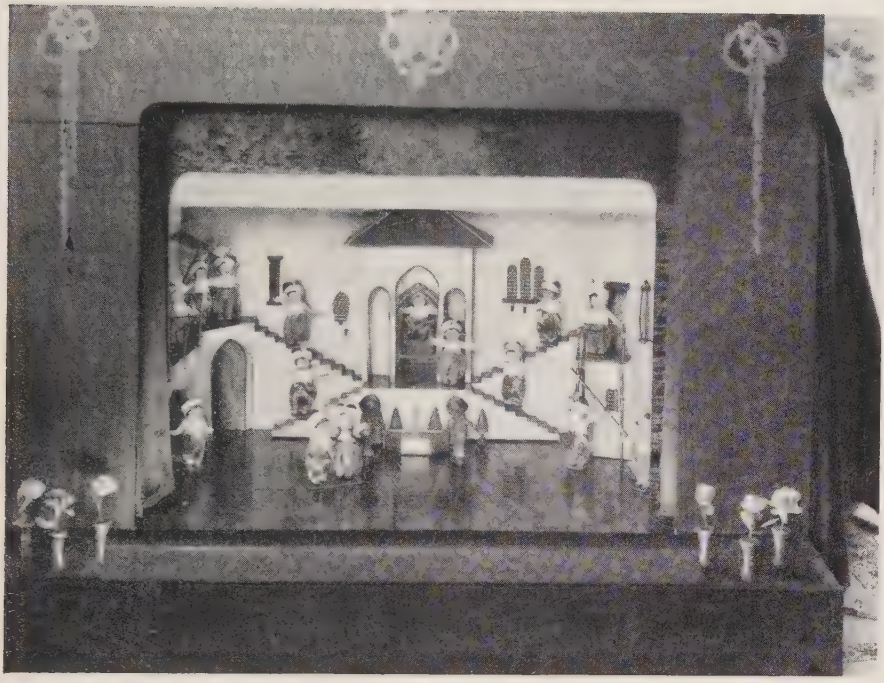
Wappin' Wharf by Charles S. Brooks. Model of stage set by Robert Miller. Little Theater, Dallas. The size of the model may be judged from the height of the pitcher at the left. "Thunder and lightning, and a rush of wind—if it can be managed. Two pirates drinking at the table."

ington Square Players and the Theater Guild of New York have existed upon it, to the astonishment first and the envy later of many experienced showmen. The Civic Repertory Theater, having shown its ability and capacity under Miss LeGallienne, is now organizing its audience. Invitations to buy tickets by mail before the box-office sale opens and the offer to reserve the same seats on the same night of every week during the winter season are other attempts to organize an assured patronage by the public.

The signal successes of local organization have been accomplished by the so-called little theaters of the country. One of the astonishing and encouraging aspects of this organization is that it does not have to be part of a national or wide-spread association. The performances in any town are continued because the district supports them. No central Iowa town need look anywhere for help except to its own contiguous territory. What distant San Francisco or New Orleans may do seems to have little bearing upon the problems of a town in Virginia. News of an unprecedented run in one of those larger cities may induce the director to repeat the play for his patrons, but he will be imprudent if he takes into consideration only that far-away success and overlooks the much more important element of the fitness of the play to his patrons. The advice that Candide was so fond of repeating is strikingly apposite in non-commercial theatrical enterprise:—everyone should cultivate his own garden.

Alert directors—and they must be alert, or they will cease to be directors—will know of the plays produced in

other places. They will utilize for themselves the fortunate experiences of their colleagues. They will avoid the repetition of others when the latter achieve merely a *succces d'estime.* Recently, I suppose no single production events were watched throughout the entire land as were the novelty of the production in New York of *Strange Interlude* and the daring of the production in Pasadena of *Lazarus Laughed.* The first of these was offered by an organization that must be grouped with the regular commercial Broadway firms, but non-commercial associations know from the past how soon the plays of Mr. O'Neill move from the regular stages to the independent ones. The long strain of acting—as well as the long strain of attention—may bar *Strange Interlude* from so-called little theaters; but what of the other plays already in typoscript or certain to be reduced to black and white within the next few months? The method of asides, soliloquies, upward surges of the submerged, moods and feelings rather than emotions, is already present in dozens of plays. Let it once be accepted by theater-goers as an effectve method of telling a story—or what is more difficult to prove—an engrossing and thrilling method of telling a story—and the experimental theaters will turn to it enthusiastically. Only the critics classified as professional could be drawn into the error of calling the device novel even in our own day. Nor need one go back to the "classics" of drama to find it. In novels, George Meredith used it with signal impressiveness in *Rhoda Fleming.* It may be found to a larger or less degree in the works of Andreev, Evreinov,



Model of second act of *Samarkand* by John T. Moss, Princeton Triangle Club. Few designers people their stages. There is more embonpoint here than the living actors displayed.

Treasure Island. Act II. Kern County High School, Bakersfield, California. Directed by Ethel Robinson. The *Hispaniola* sights the island. Young persons familiar with performances of this kind will know drama as few of their elders do.

Pirandello, in the *Overtones* of Alice Gerstenberg, the *Furies* of Zoe Akins, and *The Adding Machine* of Elmer L. Rice. The unusual feature of Mr. O'Neill's drama is that he has (several critics assert needlessly) lengthened by its use an already too long treatment.

It is undoubtedly this element of experimentation that induces hosts of persons to go to the theater. No sign of the present is more significant of a change in the theater than is this willingness to experiment. It may be merely the slight indication provided by a commercial production of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author.* It may be merely the receptiveness to the fixed set and exposed stage of *The Trial of Mary Dugan.* It may be no more than the courtesy accorded to such an allegory as Milne's *The Ivory Door.* It may begin and end with a trial of Rice's *The Adding Machine* or the sincere attempt to restore to the boards such fantasy as Tom Cushing's *The Devil's in the Cheese.* It may be frankly imitative of the clever English plan of acting Shakespeare's plays in modern clothes. It may even go so far as to let a few audiences watch a drama in expressionistic settings—as *Macbeth.* Just so long as that willingness exists, the drama will develop, in spite of all wails to the contrary.

In such experimentation, the non-commercial playhouse has a hundred advantages over the costly dividend-paying business one. Everything about it aids, rather demands, experimentation. Its audience speedily becomes sophisticated; rather, let us say, theater-wise. It soon develops a standard and a basis for comparison. It

early masters what may be termed the constants of all productions:—the director's manner, the stock of scenery or the schemes of utilizing it or designing new sets, the permanent staff of actors, or the invited performers of certain kinds of rôles. The audience becomes familiar with the voices and the vices of the actors. It anticipates their idiotisms and idiosyncrasies. It becomes so integrated with the productions that it can extrude its influence from the seats to the stage. It can become so coöperative that an individual from it can say to the director, "I saw *Everyman* on Tuesday. If you will assure me that someone else—someone whose voice I've never heard on our stage—will read the lines of Adonai tomorrow night, I'll come again and bring my wife and two children."

When a theater becomes a center with a patronage of that kind of discriminating mind, it is a real community effort, even though it does not call upon three hundred twenty-five citizens to strut their little hour upon its scaffold during the season.

There is a second good reason for going to the theater. Every educated person knows most of the books that constitute the accepted body of literature. There exists in the pages of volumes an equally significant and—when performed—much more emotionally stimulating body of drama. Grant to the adulators that no performers can ever realize their ideal conceptions of the heroes and villains and heroines and clowns of Shakespeare (may the gods forbid that any actors and actresses should), there

are more thousands of cultured persons who believe with Mr. Gillette that a printed version is not a play at all, but only the *directions* of a drama. Few persons are satisfied with scanning the printed pages of a musical composition.

Columbus, Ohio

They wish to hear the notes from the instruments; the words from the singer.

No one denies the intellectual exercise derived from reading plays. On the other hand, no one should deny

the better effect that comes from seeing a worthy drama adequately performed.

The tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare return to the stage to acquaint each generation with his masterpieces. And recently, the spirit of experimentation has bodied forth several less usual ones. Over a few seasons there have been *Richard III*, *Taming of the Shrew* in both Elizabethan and modern costumes, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Henry V* in this country, while England began the contemporary dress wave with *Cymbeline*. Revivals of various degrees of merit have brought to younger generations such necessary parts of their dramatic equipment as *The Rivals*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Trelawney of the Wells*, *Diplomacy*, *Hedda Gabbler*, *Candida*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Master Builder*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Peer Gynt*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, and *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

If the professional theater can, during recent seasons, provide such a good list, what can the non-commercial playhouses show? Let us select at random:—*The Green Goddess*, *He Who Gets Slapped*, *Liliom*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Paola and Francesca*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Arms and the Man*, *Misalliance*, *The Beggar's Opera*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *Œdipus Rex*, *Sappho and Phaon*, *The Sunken Bell*, *The Great God Brown*, *The Goat Song*, *The Skin Game*, *The Jest*, *School for Scandal*, *Lazarus Laughed*.

Neither of these lists is superior to the other. But with nearly every title in the first list—that of the commercial theater—the production was in New York or in cities along the Atlantic seaboard only. The plays in the second

list were offered in cities from Massachusetts to Texas, from Pennsylvania to Oregon, from Louisiana to Illinois.

There is a third reason for going to the theater.

A newspaper editing acquaintance of mine declares that going to the theater is the greatest indoor sport of the race.

What more need be said?

CHAPTER II

AUDITORIUMS

Nothing among all the various phases of the development of the arts is more unusual than the growth and transformation of the theater. In its changing forms it connotes the social mutations of the races and nationalities whose culture it reflects; in its unswerving responsibility to its two component parts—performers and audience—it signifies the permanence and immortality of its nature as art. The definition of the constant impulse of the drama may be based on the catechism definition of a sacrament; and since twice in our western world the drama has emerged from religious ceremony, the imitation is not an insincere one.

If a sacrament is "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," the theater is "the outward and visible sign of an inward and living art."

Sloping hillsides determined the form and structure of ancient Greek and Roman theaters. Medieval Christian churches fixed certain stage devices and conventions found in later drama of all western Europe. Inn yards made the Elizabethan and later English theaters what they were and are now. Tennis courts and banquet halls stamped their forms and furniture upon continental playhouses. And since all intellectual and cultural and artistic progress is not a straight line or an inclined plane, but a

The Merchant of Venice. Experimental performance on the small stage at Ohio Wesleyan University before transfer to the regular stage.

The grouping is much more effective here. The audience is expected to keep its eyes and attention on the stage. Both productions directed by R. C. Hunter.

Photograph by C. C. Clark

The Old Homestead. Pasadena Community Playhouse. Setting by James Hyde. There is a wealth of good fun in the old timers. Even the painted drops afford amusement.

spiral, churches today return to the ceremonial pageant, to the interpretative dance, and the feast-day drama; and Herr Reinhardt goes back to the Redoutensaal.

There is reason of a sort and truth of a kind in the belief proclaimed by literary enthusiasts of the play that nothing more is needed for the production of drama than patrons, good actors, a moving script, some wooden supports, and a few bare boards. One wonders at times why, if that is all that is absolutely necessary, these same enthusiasts wax so voluble over methods of producing, over styles of architecture, over systems of *décor* (they seem to eschew good English terms like design or stage setting), over German *treppen*, Moscow realism, European *inscenierung*, plastic sets, stylization, expressionism, and the symbolization obtained by using masks.

For most audiences of this present period, plays seem to be better as plays for being performed in theaters. Racial traditionalism or innate sense of reverence makes most spectators slightly ill at ease at dramatic emotion or emotional drama in church. In spite of their cheapness, tents—fully and honestly accepted in the peculiar pageant and vaudeville patronized by us as the circus—are not dotting the landscape to provide drama to the rural dwellers in places where the road companies no longer penetrate. Hotel dining-rooms are only occasionally made over (then maladroitly) into show rooms. Coliseums have been found too large for real dramas, though pageants and huge mass dances may be performed in them. Stadiums and baseball parks have accommodated

operas, but these instances can not be held to prove anything about plays, for drama is a well defined form, while opera is what one critic called "that anarchy of the arts."

Plays acted in buildings not designed and constructed as theaters offer in most instances only physical discomfort to the spectator. Yet so insatiable is the public's desire to see plays that by its patronage it asserts that plays in any environment are better than no plays at all.

Colleges and universities, with laudable but misplaced loyalty to tradition, are copiously endowed with pipe organs and chapels, both seldom used for more than half an hour a day, if so long. An adequate theater on a college campus? Hardly ever. The department of drama is forced to erect a portable stage, to hang voluminous curtains to mask theological decorations, to build dressing rooms by using precarious screens, to set scenery without driving a nail, to devise by means of frightening risks inadequate lighting, to attempt to be light and comic in a structure heavy with the accumulated resentment of countless classes at compulsory chapel attendance.

Former saloons and stores have been renovated to become thriving little or community theaters. Lodge halls have at least once a week or once a month known what artistic drama attempts to be. Town halls have had the atmosphere (literal, not figurative) blown out to let the hearty laughter of social comedy or political satire purify the air. Bare platforms have been transformed by sensible draping and beautiful lighting to

Uncle Tom's Cabin. Pasadena Community Playhouse. Setting by James Hyde. A small stage opening, several realistic painted drops, exaggerated footlights, stage boxes, a gaudy curtain, and the antiquated drama can be shown as it actually was.

Photograph by Standiford

The Copperhead by A. E. Thomas. Act I. University of Louisville. Directed by Boyd Martin. Designed by Hugh Sutton. The characterization of the leading person in this play attracts producers and actors, but its difficulty often makes success precarious. The quaint costumes and the historical background frequently carry it into favor of audiences.

forget their ugliness and submit to imaginative creation for a brief time. Shallow shelves have been deceptively deepened by canvas and a blue glow in the rear or by an extension at the front to hold four hundred persons tranced by *Outward Bound.* Running tracks above gymnasium floors have supported neutral colored curtains upon which imagination, instructed by the author's lines, painted its own scenery.

Crowds in attics have consented to keep their eyes from the incongruous beams above the front curtains of the stage. Old churches have had their choir ends replaced by adequate brick stage houses in which the actors were comfortable. And for years, enthusiastic audiences packed the stiff pews and creaky cane seated chairs, rubbing callouses upon their knees, often two hundred twenty men, women, and children squeezing in where only one hundred eighty-three were supposed to be. Rooms designed to exhibit paintings have been forced by mechanical means to become temporary auditoriums. Garden stages have served even as bedrooms. Barns have made surprisingly good playhouses. Many an organization has started by cleaning out a stable as did the Provincetown group years ago on MacDougall Street, down in the Village.

School auditoriums in several small cities make it possible for one acting group to perform for an entire week. Even basements—though the low ceilings make the performers unconsciously hump their shoulders and lower their heads—have housed good productions.

If you know the story of non-commercial play production in the United States you can cite at least one instance of every single kind of adaptation listed in the preceding paragraphs.

Virtually all the books on theater architecture begin with plans and descriptions of early Greek open-air structures, usually omitting all dimensions. Seldom are seating capacities recorded. If a student of theatrical buildings desires he can find countless reproductions of the out-moded Italian structures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; or, to speak more correctly, he can find countless reproductions of the same few theaters repeated over and over again in all the books, in all the monographs, in all the articles. But with these, likewise, there are seldom if ever dimensions or seating capacity. As a result it is almost impossible to compare any of these famous or notorious specimens of how *not* to build a theater with the more or less adequate and satisfactory examples of modern planning and erecting. So few open air spaces can be utilized in northern and western Europe and the greater part of the United States that drawings of them should be restricted to special treatises. The architecture of Greek and Roman theaters is beautiful even in ruins, but the age long discussion of whether the proscenium became our front curtain or our rear scenery is an archeological and academic one. We have few effective dramas to enact on the long, narrow shelf-like platforms. Our stages are always deeper than Greek and Roman ones; therefore, they are not so completely visible

The Devil's Disciple by G. B. Shaw. University of Louisville. Directed by Boyd Martin. Designed by Leslie Hanger. This scene is always difficult to set. The author prescribes only the market place and the gallows which hangs there permanently.

Captain Applejack by Walter Hackett. Act II. Western Reserve University. Directed by Barclay S. Leathem. A small stage sets this scene much better than a large one. Excellent grouping of a crowd at a tense moment.

to the entire audience as the Greek stages were. The Romans, thrifty, efficient persons as they were, saw almost at once that the open circular orchestra of their Greek originals was totally waste space, since for them drama was drama to be experienced, not a religious ceremony in which the audience participated. The spacious open-air theater at Berkeley is an imposing sight under the clear California sky, but whenever I have entered it at night to witness a performance I have noticed that the orchestra space has been covered by seats.

Three thousand years and six thousand miles have resulted in changing performances from outdoors to indoors, applaud or bemoan the location as you will. Mass effects have been replaced—again, viciously or artistically as you choose. Novelty of plot and treatment have superseded familiarity of story and declamation of verse. Acting and characterization have taken the places of oratory and types of characters. Beauty and fitness of speech have triumphed over chant and bellowing. Naturalness of manner has ousted statuesque posturing. Facial expression has found favor with audiences that would resent the static contortions of a painted mask. Even tragic actors have come down to earth, that is—most of them.

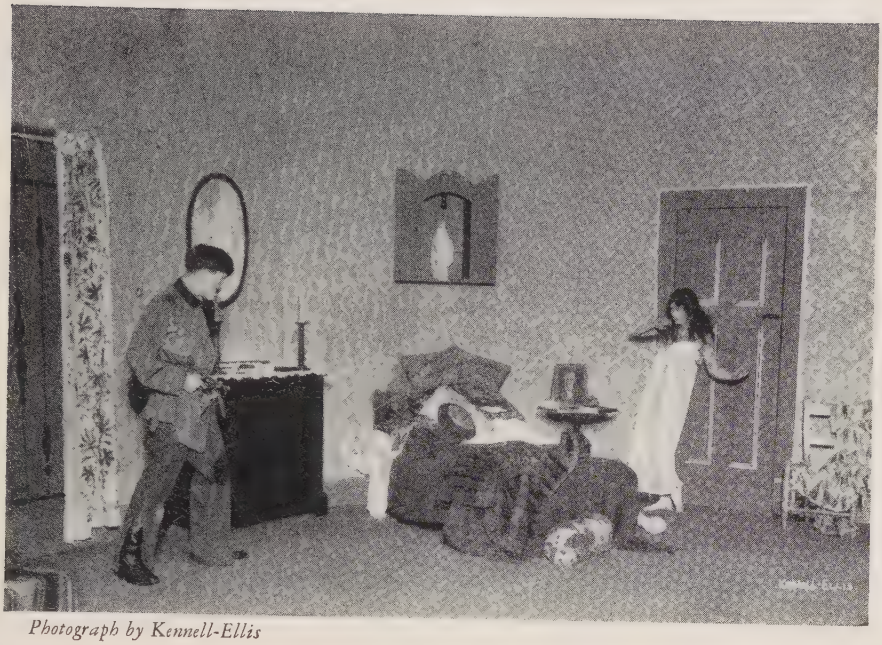
From the Elizabethan platform, its direct ancestor, our contemporary stage has also departed, though its development is easily traceable through all the forms from 1597 to 1928. Rendering myself as sympathetic an Elizabethan playgoer as I can apprehend imaginatively, I cannot understand for the life of me, how seeing actors from the

left or right side of the projecting stage would make a play (even one written for that kind of presentation) any more moving than seeing from the front a drama written for our proscenium stage. If stage boxes in modern theaters are the worst places from which to see plays, how could a seat in the balcony on the extreme side of an Elizabethan stage, or a stool close to the actors on the platform itself, or a stage box behind the curtain line in an eighteenth century theater be a better place from which to view a performance?

What technique of acting worth preserving or imitating, what system of producing worth following had any earlier theater that can not be utilized in the modern playhouse?

The person who designs and builds auditoriums has in reality only two problems:—1. To get the audience most comfortably into the building and into the seats and from the seats and out of the building. 2. To make it possible to see and hear everything on the stage.

In all ages the essential problems have never been any more numerous than those two, never different from those two. If you have attended performances in old playhouses in Europe and have had the misfortune to sit in the stuffy *bagnoires*, the over-upholstered boxes, the ends of the curving balconies, or the upper galleries hidden among the baroque foliage and figures, you may doubt whether theater architecture has at all times paid strict attention to the second of the essential problems. The adequate entrances on the ground level, the sweeping lobbies, the easy stairs, the generous corridors, and the



Photograph by Kennell-Ellis

Arms and the Man by G. B. Shaw. Act I. University of Oregon. Directed by Florence E. Wilbur. Better than many productions, this setting shows several of the incongruities later enumerated by the dialogue.

Photograph by Ernest Saloman

The Beggar's Opera by John Gay. Little Theater, Dallas. Directed by Oliver Hinsdell. Settings by Lester Lang. In London the revival of this delightful music piece ran longer than three years, and drew long-time audiences for its sequel, *Polly*. The English artist, C. Lovat Frazer, designed the adaptable sets not unlike those shown here.

multiplicity of doors in European theaters impress you as affording a complete solution of the first problem. The second—that of letting every person seated in the house see and hear everything on the stage—appears, when you recall some of your tortures, never to have entered the architect's head.

Some of the best specimens of the worst interiors, the *reductio ad absurdum* of pernicious planning are such theaters as the Teatro di Fano, the Teatro d' Imola, the Teatro Farnese at Parma, the Teatro San Carlo at Naples, the Royalty, the 1807 Haymarket, the 1808 Drury Lane, and the 1810 Covent Garden.[1] The early Italian and French houses had worse than horse-shoe balconies and rows of boxes. Even early nineteenth century English theaters gave two-thirds of the occupants of boxes and balconies an excellent view of the opposite side of the theater. The natural vision of these spectators carried their view directly across the house in a line parallel to the front edge of the stage! Drury Lane Theater and Covent Garden Opera House still wrench the necks and distort the vision of about one-half their patrons.

Once the problem of easy entrance and exit is solved, the next is the placing of the seats within the auditorium. The evident solution seems to lie in providing seats as near the stage and as near the center of the space as possible. The seats should be near the stage because space is very valuable in building operations. Non-commercial theaters are likely to cover less ground than

[1] Reproduced in *The Development of the Theatre* by Allardyce Nicoll.

money-making ones. The modern realistic subdued technique of acting makes it desirable—if not imperative —that the audience shall be close to the stage.

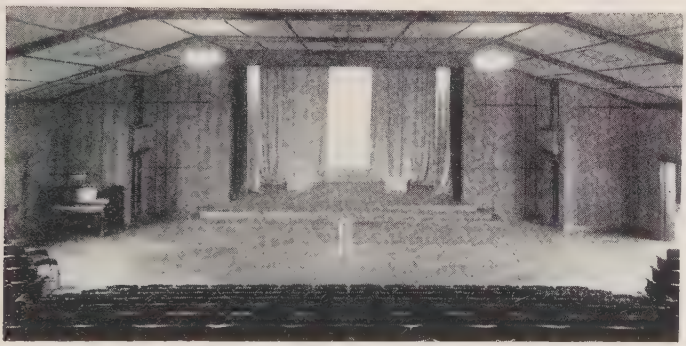
This requirement suggests the omission of the space usually provided for musicians. Many theaters (among them several commercial ones, as the Prinzregenten, Munich) accommodate the members of the orchestra below the stage and house levels, invisible to the audience. The requirement of nearness to the stage suggests also the omission of wide or narrow steps and flights of steps, forestages, and what not between the front of the stage and the first row of seats. Pleas of intimacy with the audience, plaints of needs for steps to draw the spectators upon the stage during a performance, explanation that steps facilitate passage between auditorium and stage can be swept aside by the fact-disclosing query, "How often are they used in actual performances?" During longer than a year of almost continuous production, I know of only one use in a splendidly equipped theater:— in Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*. And even then the four critics could easily have used a temporary flight of steps placed before the center aisle, or two such flights before the two side aisles.

Commercial theaters have been omitting the "top" gallery for years. The wisest plan for non-commercial theaters, with their presupposition of communal value or membership equality (even when seats are priced variously) seems to be to avoid including a balcony. It is true, of course, that the balcony keeps all the rows of

Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil by Stuart Walker. Portmanteau Players at Christadora House, New York. Costume studies for this always popular one-act.

Children of the Moon by Martin Flavin. Plays and Players, Philadelphia. Directed by Parker Fennelly. Designed by Katherine McCarron. After only a fair run on the commercial stage this play became one of the most often produced throughout the country.

seats it bears nearer to the stage than if they were added at the rear downstairs. Yet when all is taken into consideration, if the first row of seats in the auditorium is placed as near as possible to the stage (instead of being pushed back by steps) the rear seats need not be so far away. There is a decided advantage if the actor's audience is one and undivided in obtaining homogeneity of response. The assertion that the best seats in the house



Bennett School, Millbrook, N. Y.

are those in the front row of the balcony is perfectly correct; yet in spite of that fact, the balcony remains a thing apart. A top heavy house is a disheartening thing to the actors when it indicates cheaper prices; it is a difficult body to affect when it indicates that it does not wish to be any nearer the performers.

The location of the aisles depends upon both of the essential problems of planning an auditorium:—to get the persons in and out of their seats most comfortably and expeditiously, and to let every person in the house hear and see everything on the stage. The first desideratum

is to have all seats as near the center of the house as possible. To do this, aisles should extend along the side walls. A center aisle cuts out at once a long wide swath where the most advantageous seats would be placed.

If two narrow aisles will provide rapid and easy ingress and egress, they should skirt the side walls. Several theaters have been so spaced as to allow this arrangement. This planning results in long rows of seats, the longest possible in any of the various schemes. Because of this it is likely to increase one of the most annoying concomitants of theater attendance—the popping up and down to let later arrivals pass, or the rubbing of knees and the twisting of clothes if the seated patrons do not rise. The method of avoiding this annoyance is perfectly obvious:—make the distance between rows of seats so generous that persons may pass before seated ones without either treading on their feet or scraping their knees. If builders had all the space necessary, and if the actors could make themselves intelligible in the largest rooms, this would be an easy solution. Few auditoriums of any kind for any purpose have enough room to permit of such spacious placing of the seats. Yet what a sense of comfort steals over a theater patron as he walks to his seat in the Edward Sawyer Goodman Theater of the Chicago Art Institute and in a few others.

Two aisles will serve the largest number of seats if placed halfway right and left between the center and the side walls. The chief drawback of this arrangement is that it pushes those outside blocks close to the walls,

Photograph by Charles Darling

He Who Gets Slapped by Leonid Andreev. Gloucester School of the Theater. Directed by Florence Evans and Florence Cunningham. The stage was simply set by using an old sail as background through the entire play. Here the stage really looks like a circus tent.

Dulcy by Kaufman and Connelly. Kalamazoo Central High School. Designed and directed by L. D. Barnhart.

rendering several of the seats towards the ends of the rows—unless the sight lines are carefully considered and the proscenium opening is wide—almost worthless.

Two theaters that I have visited (there may be many others) offer an ideal arrangement. The aisles along the side walls are bounded next the seats by arches that permit entrance to the rows of seats. When the audience is seated it presents to the performers a compact group of persons with no long vacant lanes. In the Theater of the Golden Bough at Carmel-by-the-Sea these arches are strikingly appropriate to the architecture of the entire building. In the Goodman Theater of Chicago these arches during the performance are closed by drawn curtains, a change that saves the audience from any distraction caused by passing figures.

In earlier days the curved front of the stage apron determined the curve of the front row of seats. Succeeding rows were parallel or increasingly curved at the ends to bring the extreme right and left as close as possible to stage center. The straight front of the modern stage did not change (in most instances) this conventional curving of the rows. The general shape of the hall has a great deal to do with such lines. One of the most peculiarly shaped auditoriums is that at Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh. It is a perfect ellipse. The seats are curved in rows parallel with the rear wall. The rows nearer the stage cut sharply across the narrowing curves of the sides as they sweep round to form the proscenium. Here the stage front, instead of curving into the auditorium, or

stretching in a straight line across it, recedes from it. Seats at the exteme ends of the first few rows are closer to the stage line than those in the middle. The intervening space is occupied by a forestage of various levels.

It is always a question in planning whether these forestages and flights of stage steps will be used in performances often enough to warrant their installation. The possibility that they *may* be necessary to some as yet unchosen play hardly justifies the expense and time for their installation. If ever needed, temporary structures will serve just as well. The Pasadena Community Theater has an ingenious set of movable steps. At the conclusion of a performance certain sections disappear, revealing flights to the space below stage where supper is served. This courtesy to the audience o'erweighs any criticism on the score of expense, since apparently money was available. But most theaters will have to forego such non-production appliances.

When the Artists' Guild of Saint Louis constructed its little theater next to its regular exhibition hall it had to provide more wall space for displays and more floor space for the multitudinous miscellaneous uses to which the entire building is put. An adequate stage could be erected at one end of the rectangular room, but the floor could not be inclined. Some auditoriums with level floors have served for years, but this room was rather long for its width, and the stage was not high enough above the floor level to make the view from the rear row comfor-

Photograph by Zintsmaster

Great Catherine. University of Minnesota. Directed by Lester Raines. Red and gold drapes; gold double-headed eagles cut from paper and fastened on red curtains. Rear door with red frame and dull blue panels bearing gold insignia.

Arms and the Man. Iowa State College. Directed by Lester Raines. Bedroom scene suggested by cretonne drapes against gray on shallow stage.

The Green Cockatoo by Arthur Schnitzler. Carnegie Institute. Designed by Frank Stout. This one-act is more interesting to directors than to spectators.

Madras House by Granville Barker. Carnegie Institute. Designed by Frank Stout. This historically important and novel play is seldom produced.

table. Lawrence Ewald devised an ingenious and thoroughly practicable device.

The flooring from about a yard distant from the stage to about a yard distant from the rear wall is built as a single platform extending from side wall to side wall. The edge near the stage is hinged. By means of jacks the rear edge may be raised until an adequate incline is obtained. The light chairs, fastened in rows, are screwed to the floor. The two aisles are along the side walls. At the rear the permanent level strip of three feet serves as cross aisle. Two sets of steps lead up from it to the side aisles. This device has served for several years, and although its designer informs me he has several changes and improvements to incorporate in any future adaptations of it, it remains the simplest effective device for transforming a regular space into a good auditorium.

The chief modification that Mr. Ewald has outlined to me is a decided improvement. He would construct floor and stage on the same level. The floor would be separated at the front of the stage. Built as a single platform, the auditorium floor would be balanced upon a beam across its middle and rest at each end upon supporting jacks. The floor then would sink at the stage edge and rise at the rear. The exposed front of the stage could be masked by permanent or temporary panels. This device would provide more of that space so usually lacking in make-shift playhouses—stage height.

Other acting organizations have been forced to long platforms accommodating four or five rows of seats each,

placed upon the floor, raising blocks of seats above those before them. While this device does improve the vision of certain rows, it does very little for those rows behind the first on each platform. The second and third rows are no higher than the first. The platforms are usually heavy and difficult to move and bulky to stack.

In the first and last analysis, an auditorium is an auditorium and can hardly serve adequately as anything else, and conversely anything perfectly adapted to any other use can hardly serve adequately as an auditorium. Structures to be used as playhouses should not be constructed as dining-rooms, banquet salons, dance halls, or exhibition rooms. They should be designed frankly and fully as theater auditoriums.

CHAPTER III

SIZES OF THEATERS

There would be no difficulty with nomenclature in discussing things theatrical in the United States if the regular theaters had preserved their initial attitude of bored aloofness. Under those stable conditions—and at the beginning it did seem apparent that they would continue forever—it would have been so convenient to speak of—well, theaters and little theaters. As little theaters the "others" had their earliest inception, and "little" theaters they would have been content to remain, had the regulars not invaded their field.

The air of bored aloofness of the regular theaters was merely apparent, it seems. Today matters dramatic are a great distance removed from that point at which Mr. Belasco could vent his opinion by uttering the mutually incongruous concomitants that the little theaters were a menace and that they would not endure. It is an amazing revelation to learn that later this same opponent had so far changed that he offered a cup and lent his theater (or at least let it be used) for a little theater tournament.

The non-commercial theaters never resented the unpleasant connotations of smallness and insignificance indicated by the adjective "little." They began to do what they purposed to do with slight regard for the pronouncements and requirements of the traditional masters

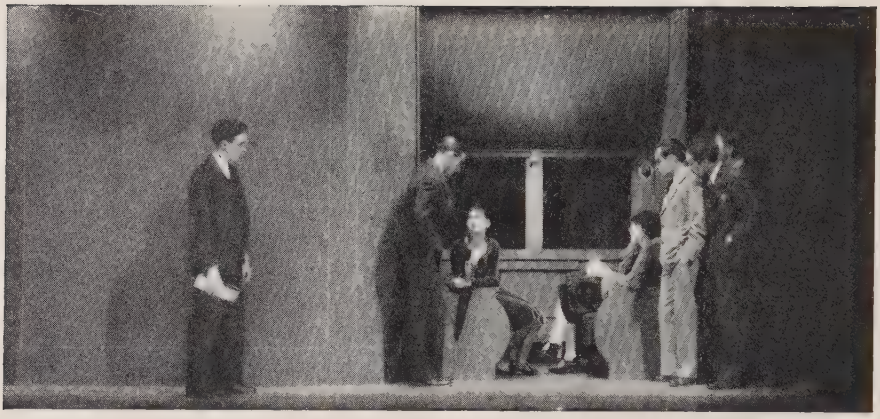
of play buying and selling. In spite of all their indifference, the professionals first began to invade the field of the independents by taking over the name that was the very badge of their difference. Mr. Ames (I believe) first called a theater devoted to the regular commercial showing of plays "little." True, in its first form, it was actually a little theater when compared with others in New York. But as so often happens in the commercial show world (and so seldom in the independent field) the house was sold to another firm, a balcony was installed, and the seating capacity increased to six hundred. As there are three other New York houses in which there are fewer than six hundred seats, and three with seats numbering from six hundred to seven hundred, this first so-called "little" theater has only a courtesy claim to its name.

In Cleveland a former burlesque house was converted to "super" or "art" films under the name—obviously chosen to attract the "super" or "art" patronage—The Little Theater of the Movies. After its short survival under the dual handicaps of its offerings and its title, it began to house regular plays. Consistently, it dropped the meaningless half of its name, and is now known as The Little Theater, thereby causing a deal of confusion in the minds of many persons who are continually acquiring the "little theater" habit, but have not yet learned that the house they wish to attend is called in Cleveland The Play House.

Yet the attempts of the pseudo Little Theater are noteworthy in a city where play patronage is growing steadily

Monday by Alfred Kreymborg. Realistic commonplace in the setting for the sake of the fantastic in the play.

Right You Are (If You Think So) by Pirandello. Cornell. Directed by A. M. Drummond. One of the three most popular dramas by this modern Italian master.



Finished by Katherine Clugston. Scenes 1 and 2. Yale. Produced for two private audiences, later for two public audiences. Setting by Frank P. Bevan. The repeated performances permit frank criticism and revision.

under wise and continuous fostering. If a long season of attempts at Shakespeare plays be overlooked, the Little Theater's bills of *A Man's Man*, *Rope* (based on the novel *Tefttallow*), and its eight-week run of *The Captive* must be praised.

It was to be expected that the moneyed interests would take over the names of the independents as they take

Photograph by Walter Rosser

Plaster Dome and Box Set, Birmingham

over their plays, their playwrights, their producers, their technical experts—but not so often their audiences.

When the first enthusiasts in this country described their tiny auditoriums, few of them, I believe, realized that they were doing what had at least once before been done in London. Thus the new is always the old—in slightly different guise. When the theater in the Hay-

market, London, was opened in 1720, it was called the New French Theater. Ten years later, when occupied by an English company, it was usually spoken of as the Little Theater in Haymarket. During some portions of its early history its owners had to resort to almost as many tricks as owners and managers in later days and distant places. After the disastrous effects of the Licensing Act of 1737, Theophilus Cibber attempted to reopen it in 1745 without having any license. Have you ever been invited to attend in London a performance of a play not allowed by the Lord Chamberlain? This was the advertisement Cibber used to draw audiences without drawing penalties for his performances.

"At Cibber's Academy in the Haymarket will be a Concert after which will be exhibited gratis a rehearsal in the form of a play called *Romeo and Juliet.*"

Let not those who know a New York Sunday in these liberal times chuckle too critically.

Most of the facts concerning sizes of theaters are intensely interesting as well as being illuminating. A high school auditorium that seats fewer than one thousand persons would be considered foolishly inadequate in an institution of any size.

Which of the New York theaters are below that figure or so close that the difference may be disregarded?

Belasco	1000	Sam S. Shubert	1395
Belmont	515	Central	922
Bijou	605	Century Roof	422
Biltmore	1000	Comedy	682
Booth	708	Cort	1043

The Torch Bearers by George Kelly. Act II. Western Reserve University. Directed by Barclay S. Leathem. Every amateur group should be required to produce this play once. A genuine contribution to the "cause" by a skilful dramatist who was trained in the non-professional theater.

Smilin' Through by Allan L. Martin. Carroll College, Waukesha, Wisconsin. Directed by May N. Rankin. The English cottage sixteen feet high. Cream, brown, and green.

Earl Carroll	998	Little	600
Elliott	924	Longacre	1019
Eltinge	892	Lyceum	957
Empire	1099	Lyric	1406
Forrest	1015	Morosco	893
48 Street	969	Music Box	1000
44 Street	1323	Playhouse	879
49 Street	708	Plymouth	1042
Fulton	913	Princess	299
Gaiety	808	Republic	901
George M. Cohan	1111	Ritz	945
Globe	1416	Sam H. Harris	1051
Henry Miller	946	Savoy	718
Klaw	800	Selwyn	1067
Knickerbocker	1412	Vanderbilt	770
Liberty	1202	Wallack's	771

What are the records of the independent theaters? When the attendance has been good, it has been very, very good. When it has increased, it has increased remarkably. Let us look at a few facts. In New York, I have no doubt, New Orleans is known as a bad theater town. In fact, I have yet to hear of any city not thus denominated in producers' offices.

In New Orleans the Drawing Room Players began modestly by performing plays at intervals in private homes. In 1919 the group organized as Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré with a membership of five hundred. With their own hands the members transformed a dingy hall into an auditorium seating one hundred eighty-four. A growing membership is always better than a large one. The New Orleans group has raised its list to six hundred, to one thousand, to two thousand, to the present limit of thirty-five hundred. It has had to provide larger quarters

until now its main auditorium seats four hundred sixty-eight, while its experimental theater seats one hundred forty.

In an extended old frame church covered outside with stucco and decorated within in Russian queernesses (but with an adequate, though small brick stage) the Cleveland Play House for years seated (most uncomfortably) two hundred twenty persons. In its newly finished structure (opened in April, 1927) its large auditorium accommodates five hundred twenty-two persons, its small auditorium one hundred fifty-four. It frequently offers bills in both theaters (*On Approval* and *Fashion; The Skin Game* and *Hippolytus; Anne Pedersdotter* and *Everyman*) so the actual patronage on most nights is full capacity:—six hundred seventy-six.

One of the most famous of American little theaters really merited the name little. It contained ninety-one seats. This was the experiment conducted successfully for a time in Chicago by Maurice Browne. Another well-known organization in the same city—Hull House—produces in an auditorium of two hundred thirty seats. Though the Chicago Little Theater, the first, for a long time held the record of minimum number of seats, its tininess was surpassed by the minuteness of the Vagabond Theater of Baltimore with sixty seats.

Because of the later work of Eugene O'Neill, the old Wharf Theater at Provincetown is an object of at least curiosity, at most veneration, to play fanatics. It is reported as seating from one hundred fifty to two hundred.

A Full House by Fred Jackson. Pennsylvania State College. Directed by D. D. Mason. A simply managed comfortable interior. The civilians seem real persons. The police department apparently sent out its junior reserves.

Photograph by Eric Stahlberg

Noah adapted from six English Miracle plays by S. A. Eliot, Jr., and produced by him at Smith College. Our sophistication has not spoiled us completely. We can still appreciate the archaic aspects of the drama.

In the latter figures one recognizes the willingness of drama enthusiasts to endure any discomfort in their pursuit of the worthy or the unusual. Productions are still made in the refitted barn during the summer season, although because of lack of genius among the playwrights an outsider hears less of the achievements than he did in what must be affectionately called the good old days.

Educational institutions have begun to provide adequate housing and production facilities for the dramatic arts. In many colleges and universities the chief activity is the writing of plays rather than producing of drama or designing for the stage. Yet even in departments where the emphasis is on composition, the test of fitness and finish should be sought and provided by means of actual stage performances. Grouped about such a course in writing plays there must be eventually if not at the beginning a number of subsidiary courses contributing to the purpose of testing the writing that is done as the chief exercise. These other courses—scene design, play production, costume design, acting, stage lighting, perhaps even dancing and fencing—will force themselves upon student attention and faculty control. An adequate department of drama will naturally and swiftly evolve from a course in the preparation of play manuscripts.

Audiences for educational institutions are gathered in various manners. The student body by invitation may be the chief, perhaps the only available audience. The student body and a few interested townspeople may form the regularly paying patronage. A much more diffi-

cult audience to obtain, but an excellent audience to test student actors' abilities, is the general audience, attracted by its desire or willingness to be entertained, that audience that appears mainly because it has heard something about a play and wishes to have its aroused curiosity satisfied. Such audiences have been drawn to *Captain Applejack*, *Outward Bound*, *Craig's Wife*, *The Great God Brown*, and plays by Ibsen and Shakespeare. Critically minded and trained audiences are gathered by invitation at Yale and at Carnegie Institute, and induced to report upon the plays they attend. Because they are expected to make reports and because they pay no admission these audiences are not too easy to impress or please. They are likely, also, to be made up of persons who do not attend regularly or frequently the commercial houses. They are interested in—shall we say a better form of drama?—at any rate, a different kind of drama. They make up *a* public for excellent drama, a discriminating public. If they remain always outside the influence of the regular theaters, they nevertheless form a large section of the cultured groups of the community. There is an important and satisfying work in providing dramatic entertainment for this class.

As in the kinds of work they emphasize and the audiences they serve, so in the equipments of their stages and the sizes of their auditoriums, college dramatic departments and associations exhibit the greatest differences.

The University of Montana, in a converted army barracks, can seat three hundred persons. Carnegie Insti-

Photograph by Gasquet

John Ferguson by St. John Ervine. Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré, New Orleans. Directed by W. Sinclair. Domestic tragedy of the best kind with every rôle a good one. Rather difficult to act convincingly, but worth all the effort expended upon it.

True Thompson as Clutie John in *John Ferguson*. Little Theater, Dallas. When characterization and detail are as good as those shown here, the non-commercial theater may be termed more than merely adequate.

tute has places for four hundred twenty persons. At the University of North Carolina the theater in the reconstructed former law building seats three hundred forty-five. On its ever-extending tours its casts have played to some two hundred thousand persons. At Cornell there are four hundred thirty-five chairs. At the North Carolina College for Women, the Play Likers use two auditoriums. The smaller one seats nine hundred; the larger two thousand six hundred. The high school building at Kalamazoo includes a regularly constructed theater with both balcony and gallery (the latter seems a quaint survival in these days when the gods have transferred their patronage to the screen), the entire house seating two thousand eight hundred.

A rapid comparison of the figures of the seating capacities of commercial theaters and those for non-commercial theaters will re-emphasize the fact that the so-called "little" theater movement is not dependent directly and only on size.

Enthusiasts of self-described advanced ideas in the theater often write and speak enthusiastically of progressing (as they call it) by a return to the ideals and plans of the early Greek open-air performances. They overlook, I believe, two important facts which cannot be explained or waved away:—the difference in climatic conditions (unless they will confine their recommendations for sections of southern California and the Gulf states), the difference in the kind of play most popular today and the subdued acting which makes that kind of play worth

attending. Another fact is likewise worth considering:—in spite of the climates inviting to outdoor activities in those two sections of the United States, the signal successes of artistic endeavor have been achieved by indoor performances—those at the Pasadena Community Theater and at Le Théâtre du Vieux Carré.

Mere spaciousness can become a drawback to any theater, open-air or enclosed. Difficulty of seeing and hearing will prohibit the general substitution of the open-air theater for the built-in playhouse. A Roman semicircle might have a diameter of three hundred twenty-eight feet; a Greek segment of more than half circle might have a diameter of two hundred ninety-five feet; no modern theater of such width and depth can be successfully operated for a long season. Though our dramatic origin is always traced back to these amphitheaters, we are really effectually divided by practice from them. We are closely related by direct descent to such structures as the Fortune Theater of London which was eighty-four feet square and the Richelieu-Molière building of Paris which was eighty-five feet wide. Curves of the balconies in the Drury Lane Theater make its plan look strange, but its measurements show the constancy of the size;—it is eighty feet wide. Compared with it, American theaters look huddled, yet the Empire in New York is seventy-eight feet across.

Commercial theaters build in as concentrated a form as is possible. Little theaters spread themselves a great deal, often in seeming disregard of cold weather seasons only, introducing central patios and real or property garden plots.

Photographs by Bell

Sun Up by Lula Vollmer.

The Enchanted April by Kane Campbell. Little Theater, Lynchburg, Virginia. Two sharply contrasted settings and plays on a small stage. Both directed by Edith M. Mack.

Romeo and Juliet. State Normal School, Trenton. Directed by Effie Georgine Kuhn. Decided variety of effects with a semi-permanent set. Excellent costuming.

Charming reliefs as these are in such localities as New Orleans, they seem slightly incongruous in northern states where patrons see their fountains and steps and arches more frequently covered with snow than bathed in moonlight.

The New Orleans Théâtre du Vieux Carré spreads delightfully around the four sides of a patio, the entire plot of ground measuring ninety feet by one hundred thirty-three. The loggia, situated in the middle of the long side on the street, forms the main entrance. At its right the foyer gives admittance to the auditorium, which with the stage, stretches to the rear line of the property. Green room and storage spaces stretch across this rear wall, while dressing rooms, an arcade, the small stage and its auditorium space (also used as a rehearsal room) bring the building to the main street line. A pantry and a coffee room connect with the loggia, thus completing the hollow square. The ground plan of the Cleveland Play House is not unlike that of the New Orleans structure, but the central court is tiny and the stages of the large and the small theater are much closer together with a high-ceilinged workroom connecting them. The wide-spreading Goodman Memorial Theater adjoining the Chicago Art Institute dispenses with open-air features. Its walls rise not higher than one story above ground level. Its entrance stairways lead down, as the structure is almost entirely underground.

If an acting organization could build on a lot sixty by one hundred twenty feet it should call itself fortunate.

Roughly allotting its spaces, it could reserve for the stage a section sixty feet by forty feet and design the stage opening to be some thirty-five or forty feet wide. Below it enough height should be reserved for a workroom and dressing rooms. The auditorium should sweep back with a uniform rise to a distance of sixty or eighty feet (in this latter case to the front wall) thus providing a seating capacity, if sixty by sixty feet, for some seven hundred thirty; if sixty by eighty feet, for some nine hundred ninety persons. If the auditorium stretches to the outside wall of the building, the floor should rise enough to allow space for the entrance lobby and offices below it. These essentials are all that are absolutely needed for the production of plays. All other features may be added if considered desirable or if social relations are to be emphasized, but the building should be primarily a theater, only secondarily a club or lounging hall.

In Texas, the Little Theater of Dallas has had a most promising growth. Within eight years the society has developed from a small group to a well organized civic organization; from performing plays in the hall of a church to winning three times in succession the Little Theater Tournament in New York; and finally in April, 1928, to opening its own building;—all this since March, 1920. If the demand for performances in the present building necessitates, the run—now six nights—can easily be extended. Eight loges take the place of the old-fashioned balcony. The total seating capacity is four hundred eight.

Photograph by Wooten and Moulton

Ten Nights in a Bar Room by William W. Pratt. University of North Carolina. Directed by Samuel Selden. A new drop depicting the Main Street of Cedarville, a small New England village in the late 1850's.

Photograph by Wooten and Moulton

One of the thirteen scenes of *Ten Nights in a Bar Room.* University of North Carolina. This production included everything possible:—"Father, Dear Father, Come Home with Me Now"; "Turkey in the Straw"; "The Face on the Bar-Room Floor."

The goal of the ambitions of most acting groups is likely the kind of building that houses the recently established department of drama under Professor George Pierce Baker at Yale.

Above and below in the spacious building are the library, two green rooms, offices for the director and the other members of the teaching staff, classrooms (several adequate for rehearsals), a dye establishment, two chorus rooms, cloak rooms, and dressing rooms.

Below the main auditorium is an experimental theater with a stage as wide as the regular producing stage above. The seating space in this subsidiary theater accommodates two hundred fifty persons. Under crowded conditions this stage and its auditorium may be used as rehearsal rooms.

The main theater is adequate in every respect for the presentation of plays under any condition that may be imposed; that is, plays may be performed before the critical faculty for the purposes of revision only; or they may be acted before a fairly large audience for purposes of observation of effect by author and staff; or they may be offered in final form as regular theater entertainment.

In the Dallas Little Theater steps lead from the floor level to the stage. When an orchestra is required, these steps swing aside, disclosing an orchestra pit. In the Yale Theater there is no provision for any orchestra; the rows of seats continue quite close to the front of the stage.

The theater at Yale contains a balcony. The total seating capacity is seven hundred. Main floor and bal-

cony are so arranged that the persons in either are not visible to the persons sitting in the other. There are several advantages in this spacing. A large audience,

Falstaff. Lake Erie College

divided by the two levels though it be, is forced by the sight lines to concentrate its attention on the stage. If the audience is small, it may be accommodated on the

first floor only. The balcony, being kept dark, is not present to the minds of the spectators. The actors are aware of the persons in the downstairs seats only, and therefore act directly to them.

In cities where adequate playhouses—such as here described—exist, should a resident lament the absence of the commercial road company?

CHAPTER IV

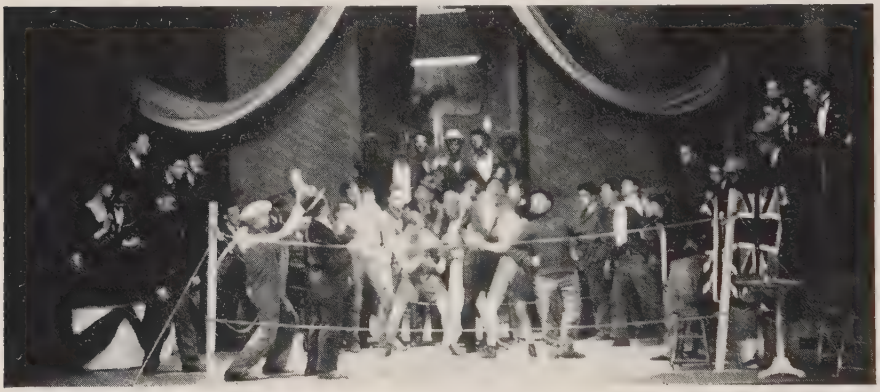
THE STAGE

When designers of little-theater stages make mistakes they may console themselves with the reflection that after all they are interested mainly in experimentation, and also that designers of professional stages make mistakes as serious or even worse. I have been told of one large city theater in which as an advance over old-fashioned materials the new stage floor was made of concrete. Only too late was it discovered that stage brace screws could not be fastened to the floor. Then at needless expense troughs were excavated in the solid material, and in these grooves wide planks were laid to which the braces could be attached. But even this change did not remedy all the defects of such an innovation. Actors off stage, walking about on the concrete floor made such squeaking noises with their leather soled shoes that several temperamental managers and stars almost lost their minds.

For the active workers, back stage is always more important than the front of the house. The classic chorus girl always declared that one city was the most attractive in the United States. Pressed for a reason, she explained that the theater there had the nicest stage entrance she had ever seen. Others pronounce certain theaters best because scenery can be put into the building and removed with least trouble. And directors complain most of all

Photograph by Photoart

Romance by Edward Sheldon. Acts I and II. University of Wisconsin. Directed by William C. Troutman. After years of popularity in both England and the United States on the professional stage, this period play still has appeal.



The Admirable Bashville by G. B. Shaw. Acts I and II. Cornell. Directed by A. M. Drummond. Some of the most glorious fooling of the English Molière in this blank verse farce.

about the lack of space, the shallowness of the entire stage, and the depth of the wings right and left.

Stage requirements for most plays are rather simple in their essence, though so difficult to fulfill. The first, the always present essential is space, much space, and more space;—space to the rear, space to the right, space to the left, and space—so annoying when it is absent, so comforting when it is present—space overhead. Elaborate grids far above, adequate supply of pulleys and lines, painting bridges, counterweights, and all the other labor-saving and time reducing paraphernalia of the most up-to-date structures may be missing, yet the hopeful director and the enthusiastic association may be willing to wait until receipts will permit their installation. But of what use is all the money in the community if above the stage sweeps the tormenting unchangeable curved shell of a concert hall - that abomination of architecture, not at all an essential of good music, as almost any orchestra playing on a stage in an interior set with sloping ceiling will demonstrate. Or of what use is all the artistic ingenuity of a community if the lodge hall has a low ceiling with two huge beams crossing the stage ten feet above the floor level? Or if the narrow-minded architect planted four steel columns about his platform? Or worse than this, if, with school-boy recollections, he boxed in his stage space with three solid plastered walls, the rear one with a narrow center door to a skimpy passageway, the right and left walls with center doors to neck-breaking flights of steps down to the level of the audience hall?

Rage and despair must enter and gnaw at the heart of a director of plays in a university when he is shown the peculiar shelf upon which he is expected to produce the masterpieces of the world's drama. No proscenium opening, no side pieces to mask the ends of the congregation balconies, no convenient plugs to provide the lighting necessary, and no back-stage space! Often in place of the latter desideratum an elaborate three-console pipe organ with its piers of columns, its banks of tubes, its immovable organist bench, its projecting side brackets;—its impossible blatant presence making necessary the crudest makeshifts; often visible in spite of the cleverest masking, determining the shape and position of scenery, forcing exits and entrances never contemplated in the script; driving the actors often to risk of injury and the audience to titters. Then add to all these physical encumbrances, the faculty provision:—"no nail may be driven into any of the woodwork," and one is amazed that enthusiasts persevere in their attempts to turn the unsuited college chapel into a house of drama.

What college and university dramatics needs more than anything else is a group of play-loving wealthy patrons who will give well planned theaters to their institutions. There will be no loss in use, for though it is almost impossible to give concerts, recitals, and plays in the old-fashioned structure designed for religious services, it is always possible (recall the thousands of Lenten and regular Sunday meetings) to hold religious services in buildings designed and used daily for dramatic productions.

Number Seventeen by J. Jefferson Farjeon. North Shore Theater Guild, Evanston, Illinois.

The Romantic Age by A. A. Milne. North Shore Theater Guild, Evanston, Illinois.

If these details appear strange to you who are accustomed to all you need for producing a play or enjoying one from a comfortable seat, ask a person who knows how the drawbacks were overcome by directors in Wheeler Hall of the large state University of California at Berkeley. Or look critically at the distracting upper fringe of added decorations to plays at another institute of learning. It is almost incredible that at any time the idea should have been prevalent that organ music was better for having all the pipes in full view of the listeners. (Page 29.) In another university the sloping sides of the roof of a Y. M. C. A. auditorium continually embarrass the director and actors, make scene shifting a herculean task, and into the stage designs force features that all persons concerned would joyfully eliminate. The inadequate stages are not in little theater buildings only, though they have their share.

If the most desirable thing about the acting area is space, the easiest way to spoil that section is apparent at once. Let architects and builders encumber it with what they consider needed in the building and the stage may be ruined forever. Encompassing walls specified by school and hall architects seem to be the most usual annoyances, yet they are not the only ones known to observers. From the number of curved backs and ceilings one might believe that countless stages belong to music conservatories.

Experimentation and untried devices have at times led theater designers into strange extravagances of both money and fancy. One small stage is built of a number

of hollow blocks covered with canvas. The idea behind the plan was that different stage levels might be created by drawing up some of these boxes and piling them in various sections. Why levels made of these cumbersome blocks (they had no holes in their sides to serve as handles) would make better levels than the usual folding sides and platform top was never explained. Their worst feature was that they never lay level or tight in the flooring. They teetered at every footfall and squeaked at every step. Getting them from their places was like drawing paving blocks from a much traveled city street. They were, as a stage device, a dismal failure.

The brilliant ideas that have sparkled on blue prints but sputtered out in reality are numerous enough to fill a book. When the plaster-horizon fad spread across the country, it found many persons with enough money to install it. Those who were far-seeing realized that the play with interior and realistic sets would have to be produced still, if only to provide pleasing variety, so they designed their plaster domes with some chances for setting scenes within them. Flying whole sets became impossible at once, but holes could be cut in the plaster surfaces, ropes extend through them to support borders, foliage, back walls, ceilings, chandeliers, and what-not else. When the horizon was to be beautifully tinted with lights, the ropes could be drawn up and the holes masked by neatly fitted plugs.

If a distant horizon, why not a near one? This original thought struck one owner, who did not stop to recall that

Photograph by Kunishige of McBride Studio

Clari or the Maid of Milan by John Howard Payne, 1823. University of Washington. Directed by Albert R. Lovejoy. This play introduced "Home, Sweet Home."

Photograph by Wooten and Moulton

On Dixon's Porch by Wilbur Stout and Ellen Lay. University of North Carolina. Directed by Frederick H. Koch. This play shows the development of an idea in a play writing course. Originally it was called *In Dixon's Kitchen*. As most folk plays take place in cabin interiors, a decided gain in picturesqueness is obtained by the change.

the actual horizon is a more or less constant distance from a beholder. Why not a movable horizon? So a plaster dome was constructed with a steel-frame backing, strong enough to support its weight and that of the plaster and heavy enough to prevent the dome's toppling forward. Then the entire structure could be moved forward or rearwards on rollers and thus its usefulness be increased. Once erected it was found immediately too ponderous to move, so there it stood, exactly as a permanent dome does. More serious than that, its weight soon began to sag the stage. This catastrophic sinking was averted by below-stage bracing. But that formerly clear space looks like a mine shaft, and what was to have been open working space is a clutter of piles and wedges.

A plaster dome, if large enough not to interfere with any possible use of a stage, can be made a beautiful background for certain settings, but a careful consideration of its rigidity, its limited use, its place in most of the dramas likely to be chosen, must govern decisions upon its inclusion or elimination. And the consideration must be terminated long before the plans for the building are approved.

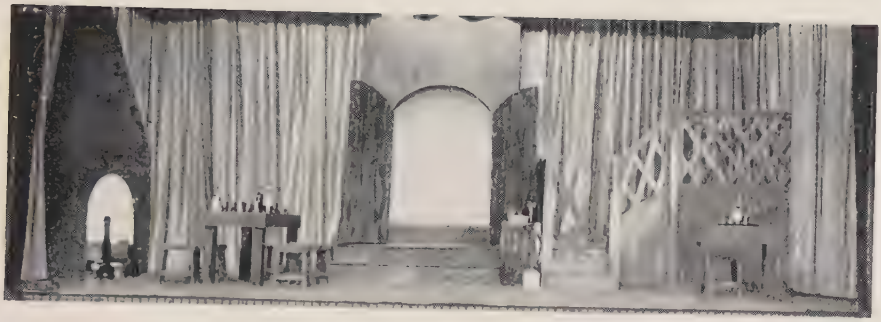
Should trap doors be cut in a stage when it is built? Let the answer be reached by doing some counting. How many plays that you have seen in the past five years required trap doors? Could the effects have been obtained by some device other than holes in the stage? During a rather active theater attending life, I can recall only two instances in recent plays that actually required open-

ings in the stage:—*The Spider* and *Dracula*, neither of them plays that are likely to be chosen by non-commercial directors. *The Sunken Bell?* A well coping sufficiently high will obviate the opening in the stage floor. The apparitions above the witches' cauldrons in *Macbeth?* Study the permanent setting for that tragedy used by the Cleveland Play House (page 275). Why not wait to see if such a mode of entrance and exit is needed, and then if it cannot be avoided, have the opening made by the carpenter as you want it and where you want it?

When a building houses two stages—an experimental stage and the regular production stage, seldom if ever are the two stages exactly alike. Most frequently they differ in dimensions. In one university the experimental stage is only fourteen feet wide and ten feet deep; the performance stage is three times as large.

In New Orleans the experimental stage of Le Théâtre du Vieux Carré is about ten feet by twenty-four feet; the regular stage is at least three times as large. While it is excellently equipped for lighting effects, there is no headroom on the stage, so that its two cycloramas, one black, one gray, cannot carry the eye much above the height of the proscenium opening.

There is a similar difference in the theater at Yale. The experimental stage is of the same size as the regular stage. This is one great advantage in an organization where the emphasis is upon play writing, for the acting—grouping, distances, entrances, exits, crossings, furnishings, business—can be exactly the same during working-out periods



Photographs by John S. Neary

Luca Sarto by Charles S. Brooks. State Normal School, Trenton. Directed by Effie Georgine Kuhn.

The Green Goddess by William Archer. Acts II, III, IV. Western Reserve University. Directed by Barclay S. Leathem. Pylons, flats, and draperies skilfully used to produce markedly different places.

as during performances before an audience. But the regular performance stage has a linen cyclorama, while the experimental stage—with an opening of the same size—is framed by a cupola horizon. Though the differences here are less marked than in most theaters, they are present to some degree.

A group need not sigh for an "experimental" stage if it have an adequate stage. Experiment is just as real when carried out upon the regular stage as it is when cooped up in some dark and uncomfortable nook of the basement. My experience is limited, but I have yet to see any play in a theater seating one hundred fifty which would not have been just as effective in an auditorium seating five hundred. Professional critics seize the incongruity of such an arrangement when it results in confining an old Greek tragedy—conceived for great sweeps before thousands in the open air—to a fifteen by twenty-five foot stage in a long narrow room and reducing the chorus from a moving mass of interpretative commentators to five posturing decorations.

One of the most encouraging indications that performances throughout the land are assured of adequate space is contained in the dimensions of the recently built and the presently planned stages. The New Orleans little theater has an acting space twenty-nine feet wide and twenty-four feet deep, with opportunities both right and left for extensions. Effects of distance are obtained by using a circular cyclorama tinted from above by hanging flood lights. Above the stage on one side is the fly gallery

where all ropes are handled. Adjoining the rear of the stage is a stock room made by roofing over a yard. On the other side are two more storage rooms. Men's dressing rooms are on this level. Above are the women's dressing rooms, a make-up room, and a large sewing room.

The recently opened new building of the Little Theater of Dallas was designed by two architects who have acted in plays themselves. It is unfortunate that every archi-

Dear Brutus. Lake Erie College

tect does not go through this harrowing training. These two acting-designers have known how to provide backstage space, needs, and comforts. Their stage is seventy feet wide (the wing space is comforting). The gridiron is thirty feet above the flooring. Beneath the stage is a room large enough to accommodate scenery and to prepare sets. An electric hoisting device tilts the stage floor in two sections and through the opening appears a platform with the complete set upon it.

Beggar on Horseback by Kaufman and Connelly. Illinois State Normal University. Directed by Verna Grubbs. This satire is excellent material for unusual treatment. Rapidity of action determines many details of the settings.

Photograph by Charles Darling

Japanese Noh Play. Gloucester School of the Theater. Directed by Florence Evans and Florence Cunningham. In an exotic drama masks will always be more appropriate than in realistic stories of the near-at-hand. Here drama and interpretative dance meet and fuse.

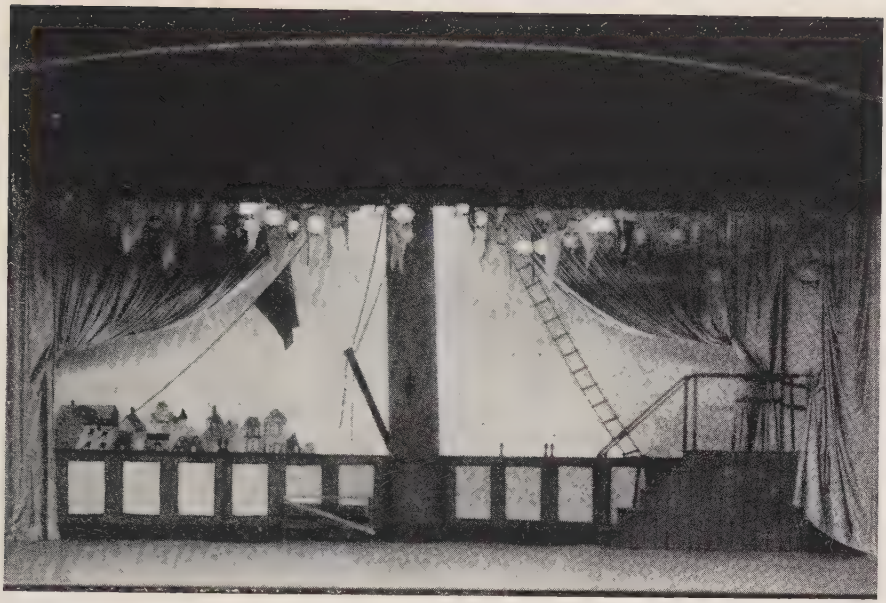
The Yale stage has a depth of forty feet behind the curtain line. The proscenium opening is thirty-four feet wide by twenty-four feet high. The gridiron is far above the floor:—seventy-five feet, to be exact. All the space above the stage is open. There are no fly galleries. All the lines come down one of the side walls to the stage, with counterweights below. This permits the handling of all pieces from the stage floor itself, a custom introduced several years ago into the best equipped professional houses. In the proscenium walls to the right and left there are small doors which give entrance to the forestage or the space before the curtain. Beyond the rear wall of the stage is a workroom. Here scenery may be not only built but partly set up. A large section of this wall may be removed and the set rolled forward upon the stage itself. If needed, this wall can be wholly or partly removed and thus a depth of seventy feet obtained. It would appear, however, that except for some unusual effect as in a pageant, or for a spectacular mass movement, the depth of the regular stage—forty feet—will be ample.

Money is more and more easily raised for equipping community and little theaters, but not often do public bodies, such as boards of education, realize that the best equipped stages and auditoriums are most needed in smaller cities where commercial entertainment is seldom anything except films. There are several instances of broad-minded school officials who have accepted drama as a fine art and fostered its study in classes and its production upon the stage. It is a pleasure to cite a city with

a school building in which are a large auditorium (two thousand eight hundred) and an adequate stage well equipped to serve both pupils and citizens. In Kalamazoo the high school completed in 1925 houses one of the most impressive theaters in the country.

The stage is unusually large. It has an opening forty feet high, fifty feet wide. From curtain line to rear wall the distance is thirty-six feet; the grid is seventy feet above the stage level. From side wall to side wall the distance is eighty feet, affording ample wing space for working and shifting scenery. All the lines—some thirty sets in all—are accurately counterbalanced, so that it is easy to fly scenery. On a level with the fly floor there is a paint rail with a forty-foot paint frame, hot and cold water, an electric stove, and other conveniences for decorating scenery. Certainly with such stage equipment the pupils of that high school are learning more about drama as an art form than any of our forefathers did, restricted as their experience was to mere attendance upon the plays offered by traveling companies.

The more reports one receives from school, college, and university centers, the more encouraged one becomes concerning the future of drama in the districts influenced by these institutions. Never before have so many persons been brought into contact with drama as acted plays. The old-fashioned method of studying classic plays as literary masterpieces to be read in books and discussed mainly as exercises in philological oddities has passed—at least in most places. As important—though not so schol-



Pinafore by Gilbert and Sullivan. University of Montana. Directed by Carl Glick. This photograph illustrates what can be done with a gray cyclorama, a few pieces of scenery, and a plaster back wall. The cost of the setting was fourteen dollars.

Henry IV. Boar's Head Tavern. North Shore Theater Guild. Directed by Alexander Dean. Designed by Aleyn Burtis. With the use of the Elizabethan fore and inner stages to allow for the changing of tapestries and furniture, the scenes move in rapid succession. The plaster and timber walls of Tudor architecture serve as interiors or exteriors.

arly in the eyes of the aged textual critics and etymological researchers—are the courses in recent drama of the United States, Great Britain, and continental Europe. The names of Ibsen, Shaw, O'Neill, Barrie, Synge, D'Annunzio, Sudermann, and Chekov are as familiar through production as the names of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Sheridan, and Goldsmith were a generation ago through reading.

The journeys of little theater groups to New York for the Cup Tournament every spring are well known, of course. Not so well known are the college activities, one of which drew acting groups from the University of West Virginia to Evanston, Illinois, to win a contest with Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, and a group from the North Carolina College at Greensboro to win second place with Halman's *Will o' the Wisp*.

This latter college is the institution with two rather large auditoriums:—one seating nine hundred, the other seating two thousand six hundred. The stage in the former hall is large enough for all probable "little theater" offerings. The stage in the larger building is ninety feet wide and forty-five feet deep. The proscenium opening is forty-two feet wide and thirty-five feet high. The fly loft is sixty feet above the stage floor. There are fifty sets of blocks and lines, about half of them counterweighted. There are trapped areas in the floor. Could a professional theater provide much more? But this stage in a college for women has sixteen dressing rooms, a carpenter shop, a paint shop, a paint bridge, and a frame

fifty-two feet by twenty-seven feet. Basement space for working and an excellent lighting system make this house the equal of many New York theaters, the superior of many. The director wisely feels that at times it is a little too large for the productions. He and his actors would rather play to three seven hundred audiences than to one two thousand six hundred one. Repetition is a necessary means of training in the assurance of acting and in the responsibility of the mechanical aids in producing.

CHAPTER V

REALISM

The aspect of realism most frequently present in the minds of the members of an audience, most often discussed by theorists of the art of acting—both those who preach and those who practice—is the reality of the emotion portrayed by the performer. The old adage of Horace is always cited by those who insist that the greatest acting depends on the invasion of the actor's consciousness by the actual feeling he is portraying. I once heard an actress asked how she managed to bring real tears to her eyes in a Shakespeare scene. Most graciously she replied:

"I did not bring them; Shakespeare did that."

And all her hearers murmured at her power none-the-less, which was likely exactly the effect she intended deliberately at that moment to produce upon that audience.

All of us have heard the oft-repeated story of the marvelous impression effected by Duse—who scorned make-up, if we can believe the press statements, who at the hearing of terrifying news could let a flush spread over her face that had been of an ashen pallor. And one critic, at least, has related that he watched her narrowly at that moment and saw her hand squeeze hard upon the edge of a table and then suddenly release her grip to make the blood rush to her face. I have been assured that less renowned actors who have had to produce the same effect

have worn a collar of a smaller than quite comfortable size, and at the tense moment have pressed their heads tight down upon its edge and so held the blood until it turned their faces red.

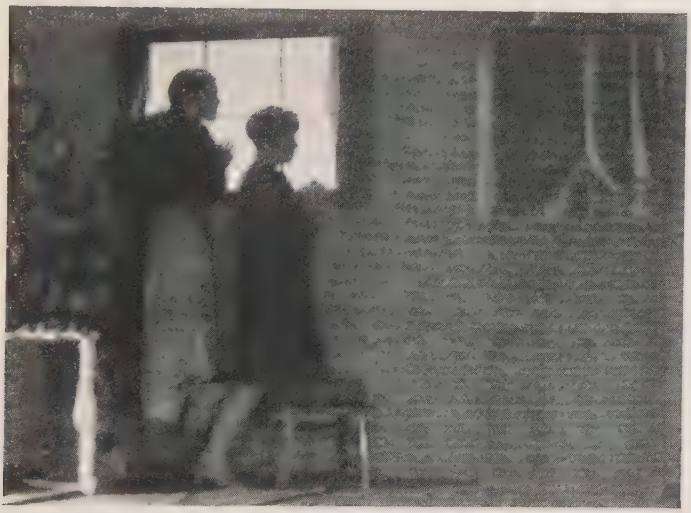
Let discriminating critics determine how much of such mechanical manipulation constitutes realism. At any rate the result was realistic.

If an actor must feel all the emotions he displays, an Othello must become crazed with jealousy every night and twice on Thursdays and Saturdays. Ophelia must lose her mind (some Ophelias I have seen seemed to have accomplished that feat, but not to the improvement of their acting) and Laertes must hate Hamlet murderously. Nora of the doll's house must loathe the man playing opposite her (often in actual life, her husband); Katherine must eat nothing in order that she may actually feel the pangs of hunger under Petruchio's taming regimen.

The trend toward realism will demand more consistency than just hinted. If while she acts it, the actress *is* Hedda Gabbler, to be consistently realistic she must, when she goes off-stage to toy with the pistol, really put a bullet through her body. Othello should smother Desdemona at every performance; but in that case he will have to keep a bevy of innocent trained young maidens in seclusion to fall in love with him at every repetition of the play.

If there are Frenchmen or Swedes in a play, realism demands that there be real Frenchmen and Swedes in the cast. Actually this has been carried out in many productions, at times most successfully; at others, most dis-

astrously. The earliest actor of the realistic (and therefore strange) Frenchman in Shaw's *Fanny's First Play* had been born in France. John Drew used to tell how elated he was when he learned that Sarah Bernhardt had once wanted him to act in her company in Paris. Later he heard that he was to be cast as a brash American whose French was—well, you have heard it on the boulevards.



Will o' the Wisp. Western Reserve University

Realism seems always to have been tempered on the stage by convention. When *Bunty Pulls the Strings* was all the rage in this country, dozens of Scotch men and women were imported to act the characters to the life. All of them had to Anglicize their brogues; and some few whose utterance could not be made acceptable to audiences, who with all their obtuseness *do* like to understand the speeches, remained idle during the run of the play,

drawing salaries according to the contracts made in Great Britain.

While the Russian realistic enthusiasm was sweeping everything before it, Evreinov urged upon the fanatics the most delightful *reductio ad absurdum* of their tenets. Do not let Ibsen be acted in the language of your country; perform his plays only in their original tongue. Never use a sound reproduction of a Renaissance table; buy a shaky genuine specimen. If you hold to the fourth wall of the stage, never think of the audience; shut it out entirely; build up that fourth wall.

The realists always lug in the Greeks and support their contentions with the unities of time and place, seldom knowing or remembering that only one of these was a genuinely Greek requirement of drama. Aristotle insisted only that drama should have unity of action. He did remark, without any insistence, that the duration of plays was generally restricted to twenty-four hours or a little longer. Unity of place he does not mention. Several Greek plays show changes of place and stretches of some days, and these in spite of the fixed architecture of the theater, the absence of a curtain, and the inappropriateness of having the same chorus gather together in several different localities.

The Italian Renaissance critics in their insistence on the three unities out-Greeked the Greeks themselves. Then came the battle royal of the theorists. Sir Philip Sidney's *ex cathedra* pronouncements were disproved by all the best Elizabethan dramatists. Ben Jonson vacil-

Photograph by Charles Darling

The Lady from the Sea by Henrik Ibsen. Gloucester School of the Theater. Designed by Jonel Jorgulesco. Directed by Florence Evans and Florence Cunningham.

Photograph by Eric Stahlberg

The Compromise of the King of the Golden Isles by Lord Dunsany. Smith College. Directed by Irma Burkhardt and S. A. Eliot, Jr. Dunsany's dramas always lend themselves to originality of setting and decoration. Here the gold on black is as exotic as the author's theme.

lated. Milton turned to the ancients. Corneille decided that a play should depict only the events that could happen in the time it takes to perform it. The English Restoration and early eighteenth century authors talked about the unities, but their plays disregarded them. Even France, with Rostand, and Italy, with D'Annunzio, swept the old conventions aside. Yet at just that same time Ibsen and others akin to his sterner genius were forcing their stories into the concentrated time and space of the early Greeks. Is all progress, then, merely a spiral?

The Norwegian manager-dramatist observed the unities strictly in *Ghosts* and in *John Gabriel Borkman* made a later act overlap in time the preceding one. G. B. Shaw even dared to write *Getting Married* with no intermission indicated in the entire script (though it is played in three acts). Synge delivered *The Play Boy of the Western World* with one stage setting, but he has described the transformations he was forced to work upon his plot first, because it is impossible in a theater building to represent the wind-swept hillside upon which the hero split his father's skull (Eugene O'Neill had the same difficulty with the outdoor scenes of *Beyond the Horizon*) and second, because the resources of the Dublin Abbey Theater were so limited that he had to forego the scene at the wedding before the church, where he had planned in the early version to have the resurrected father appear to spoil his assailant's glorious climax. Frank Craven has humorously explained how he discovered that in a scholarly manner he had achieved wonders of concentration in his

planning of *The First Year*, whereas he had been aware only of trying to fit his plot into two moderately-priced interior settings. His assumed complacency at his erudite triumph was like the real delight of Monsieur Jourdain who suddenly discovered that without trying he had been speaking prose all his life.

With the Greeks a great influence in the observance of the unities was the physical structure of the theater. Often with more recent dramas, a similar reason has produced a similar result. Many plays, with their observance of the three unities as an aid to realism, have forced the most unreal, contorted situations into their stories.

It is never safe to assert that any one mode has departed from the theater or even waned in popularity. The next successful play may contradict the most closely knit logic. Tomorrow may disappoint all the prognostications of today. Yet it is safe to believe that the fussy realism dubbed Belascoism has disappeared. Makers of books still print the picture of the cluttered room in *The Return of Peter Grimm*, entirely overlooking the fact that the play was first produced in 1911. Surely its period explains —if it does not excuse—everything in it.

Many of the same unfavorable critics of this kind of stage realism (they also cite a fully equipped Child's restaurant in another Belasco production) saw only merit in the attempts at realism in the flabby and shabby scenery of the Moscow Art Theater when it toured this country. They asked one another if they saw the samovar actually steam; and if they noticed that in *Uncle Vanya*

Pueblo by Covington Littleton. Act I, 3. Yale. Designed by Donald Mitchell Oenslager.

Only a cyclorama could make real the sense of distance in the desert. This illustration shows how realistic detail may be emphasized by varying levels for acting. Picturesquely beautiful as well as theatrically effective.

Pueblo by Covington Littleton. Act II. Yale. Settings by Donald Mitchell Oenslager. Though the impression is of an entirely different place, the same levels and general form of the stage setting are kept from the first act.

the adorable Stanislavsky ate real jam from a saucer. Few critics protested at the disturbing change the producer made in the first act of this play; few of them knew what the drama was about;—perhaps it was just as well.

Where is the vaunted realism of this Russian method today? Where even in its own country?

Is there not a warning, a guide in the kind of plays to which the archpriest of realism turned in later years:—*Little Eyolf* and *When We Dead Awaken?* Why did Mr. Shaw turn to *Cæsar and Cleopatra* and *Saint Joan?* Why should Mr. O'Neill devote his energy to *The Fountain, Marco Millions, Lazarus Laughed,* and *Strange Interlude?* Often, just when the stage seems steeped in realism, there appear successes that inject other elements, in essence incongruous yet amalgamated with the photographs of daily existence. Make a list at random, include the literature and mere theater; notice the dreamlike working always to prevent realism from souring dramatic fancy:—*Man and Superman, Great Catherine, Dear Brutus, Mary Rose, A Kiss for Cinderella, Cyrano de Bergerac, Francesca da Rimini, Success, The Romantic Age, The Devil in the Cheese, Captain Applejack, The Ivory Door, Children of the Moon, Beggar on Horseback, The Road to Rome, Saint Joan, The Cradle Song, Rollo's Wild Oat, A Masque of Venice, March Hares, My Lady's Dress, Chantecler, Romance, Liliom, R. U. R., He Who Gets Slapped, Hassan, Androcles and the Lion, The Tavern, The Man Who Ate the Popomack, Seven Keys to Baldpate, The Great God Brown, Processional, If, The Adding Machine, Gas, Emperor Jones,*

Goat Song, The Blue Bird, Six Characters in Search of an Author.

For the producer and the designer the problem of realism or how much realism goes further, opens other lines of thought, and ways of action.

Shall a realistic play be set and acted realistically?

Shall a non-realistic play be set and acted realistically?

Eugene O'Neill's *The Great God Brown*, in New York, was so produced. In the two scenes on the Casino pier, the familiar street lamp of all American towns was the center of all the groups. Yet an art theater set that entire play in a totally different manner. The two illustrations on pages 279 and 280 show the difference.

Shall a non-realistic play be set non-realistically?

What shall be done with such a play as *Chantecler?*

The commercial theater aimed at factual realism. Later productions have minimized the chicken and farmyard elements of this poem-drama, and have preferred to make setting, costuming, and interpretation emphasize the figurative and symbolic aspect of this original conception—a conception, it may be added, more original and clever than the resultant play is meaningful or dramatic.

How far shall realism be the aim in a realistic play, let us say in *Beyond the Horizon?* The two treatments accorded this drama by the commercial theater and the non-commercial theater illustrate rather neatly the differences between, not only the ideals, but the practical operations of the two kinds of playhouses. Let it be said at once, however, that to its credit, the professional theater first

Liliom by Ferenc Molnar. Scene 1. University of Washington. Directed by Albert R. Lovejoy. A lamp-post, a park bench, a profile at the rear to mask the line where curtain and stage meet, a cut-out drop against a deep-blue cyclorama. What could be more simple—or more impressive?

Photograph by Kennell-Ellis

Liliom by Ferenc Molnar. Act I. University of Oregon. Directed by Florence E. Wilbur. Though only a few flats and drapes are used, this setting is entirely appropriate to the unreality of this original drama.

produced *Beyond the Horizon*, and by that very act helped later directors immeasurably by both example and warning. It is no wonder that the active workers groaned and

Little Old New York. Bakersfield Junior College

worse when they read the script and tried to visualize the scenery for the first scene.

The New York production, in the first place, tampered with the text. In the first act a fairly long and telling scene between one of the sons and the father was omitted.

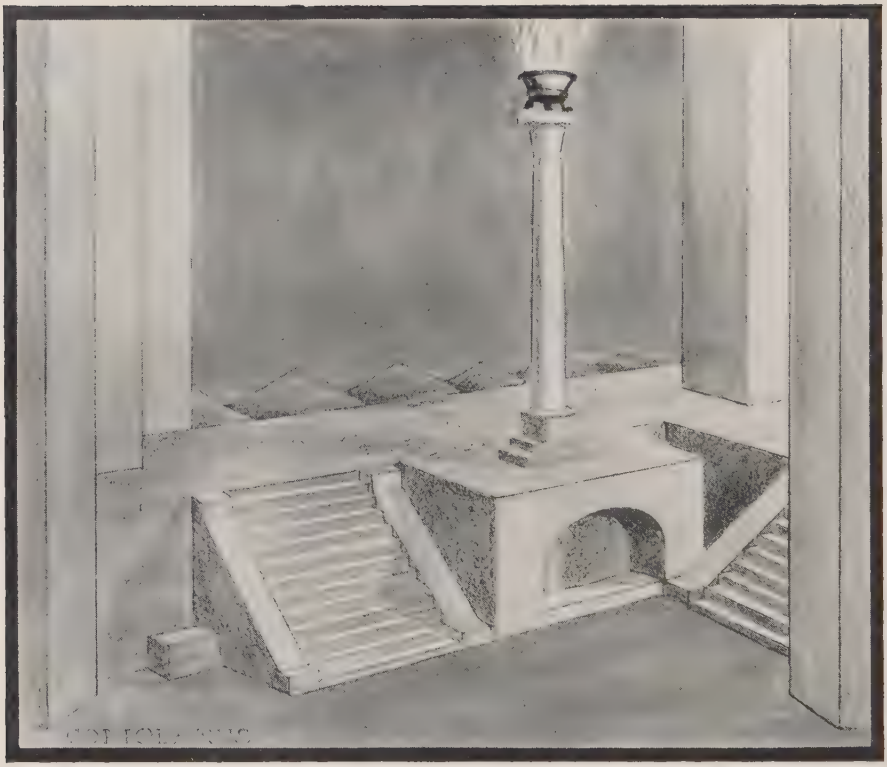
The play was made to end in a way entirely different from the way in which the author published it. The book version ends on the side of the hill, as the play begins there. The sick son ventures out and dies in his last attempt to pierce beyond the horizon. That would have meant in the last act a change of scene. The kitchen interior was shown; we were told that the sick man had risen from his bed, had left his room, and had gone out to die on the hill. The actual events of the tragedy were not shown at all.

The art theater production carried out fully all of the author's intentions and instructions. Recognizing that the side of a hill is a difficult place to show in a building, and recognizing that for better or worse the present-day stage is a picture stage, it frankly and plainly framed this scene, setting it so far back that the audience was forced to look at the hill slope and beyond it to the blue light of the cyclorama. No stretches of dialogue were cut; the play was presented as stipulated by its author. The narrow view of the hill was more convincing than the broad expanse on the full professional platform with lines of stones to mark the wagon road. Such fidelity as this is one of the reasons why discriminating persons will regularly and always—while not deserting what is worthy in the commercial theater—patronize the theater in which art and ideas count for more than the earning of huge profits.

With all the insistence of realism on the eternal verities and its attention to means of making impressions, it is interesting to notice the little oversights, the petty defects,

Photograph by Charles Darling

Liliom by Ferenc Molnar. Gloucester School of the Theater. Directed by Florence Evans and Florence Cunningham. A small stage need not deter a director from attempting serious plays of momentous themes.



Coriolanus. Designed by Richard Rychtarik. A sketch for a permanent or semi-permanent setting. Mr. Rychtarik, artist and architect, has designed for theaters in Prague, and the Play House in Cleveland, and has exhibited frequently in New York, Chicago, and Cleveland.

the insufficiently considered trifles, and the gaucheries that offend the keen-eyed and quick-witted.

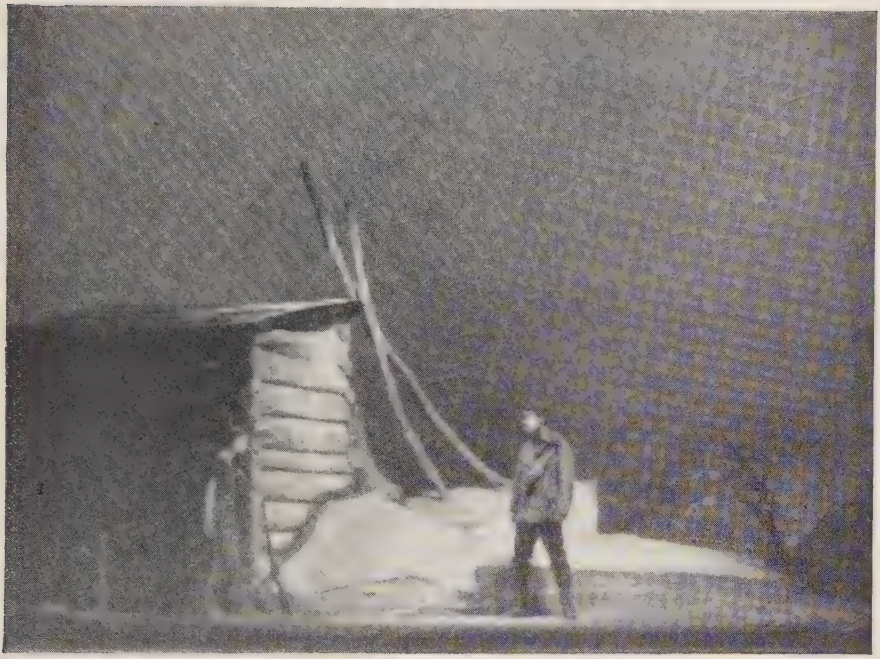
There are directors who naïvely admit that they know little about women's clothes—not a heinous lack in itself, if it is compensated by the knack of enlisting expert advice and a dress-parade committee—official or informal. Many men in audiences are sensitive to incongruities; they may not be able to point out what is amiss; but they would explain that the scene fails to "click." The reason may be so simple a one that in *The Mask and the Face* in which everyone is supposed to be dressed in the fashion, some single six-year-old gown (usually borrowed) has intruded. Or the actor portraying a diplomat, having recently visited vaudeville or musical comedy, lets his key chain be seen with his dinner jacket. Evening clothes are bothersome to many men on the stage. A suit is made to serve for years, and we in the audience are betting with ourselves that the trousers will slip or the vest will rip. The Spanish ladies in *The Great Galeoto* may think that huge combs are pushed into back hair horizontally and consequently fail to be realistic as inhabitants of Madrid. In *The Circle* though everyone else is acting like subdued refined English ladies and gentlemen, Lady Catherine is out-Cartering Mrs. Leslie, and the complete evening goes askew.

Many of the lapses from sensible realism would be irritating if they were not so ludicrous. I know one good actor of serious rôles whose trousers—even though he be a Prime Minister with valets to look him over—never

fit him or reach his shoes. His neckties always ride up in the rear. There is always some gaucherie in his clothes for the spectators to overlook. But then, realism in suits and shoes is too much to expect on the stage.

Drinking scenes are seldom convincingly realistic. Perhaps the reign of prohibition has removed all opportunities for study of the actual process, but the audience feels—if it does not know—that stage wine is potent and sudden in its effect. One small toss and the intoxication begins. Convention, doubtless. But no convention can excuse the overturned cup and flagons and steins—often lying on the floor, which at the command, the invitation, the cue to drink, are frantically retrieved, and with no more liquor poured into them, are energetically drained to the dregs once more.

Working with modern material naturally requires closer attention to realistic details. There is no need of citing the wireless fourth dimension electric lights that blaze obligingly ten seconds before anyone has touched a switch; or the moonlight that cannily follows the lovers about the room; or the telephone that fails to ring before the villain puts the receiver to his ear; or the pistol shot that is so patently a sharp thwack of a cane on a cushion; or the threats of a mob that begin and end suddenly with no continuity before and after their cues; or the bald tops that do not join their own foreheads; or policemen who look not a day older than seventeen; or crowds of old peasant women with no make-up on their smooth young countenances; or Scottish soldiers in *Macbeth* obviously



Photograph by Stone

The Patriarch by Boyd M. Smith. Yale. Setting by Donald Mitchell Oenslager. A simple setting on a large stage, in which by arrangement and lighting the attention is concentrated upon the acting. The bleak bareness accentuates the significance of the theme of the play.

Ralph Roister Doister by Nicholas Udall. Western Reserve University. Directed by Mildred I. Throne. This historically important play is more often talked about than produced.

recruited from the local high school; or stockings where there should be bare feet and legs; or bare legs where there should be silk tights; or *been* pronounced *bean* and *were* pronounced *wear* by ignorant guttersnipes and mountaineers.

What we in the audience consider the acme of realism may be the exact opposite. When I commented on the effect of realism in *The Trial of Mary Dugan* in

Romeo and Juliet. Normal School, Trenton

having the courtroom furniture dusted, a lawyer assured me there was nothing realistic about it; it is merely stage business; no courtroom in which he had ever pleaded had ever been dusted.

Obviously blatant realism defeats itself. *Ars est celare artem.* In poetic and fanciful drama we are tolerant of addresses directly to us; we enjoy the quaintness of soliloquy and aside; we rather warm to the familiar advice and appeal of prologue and epilogue. In *Peter Pan* we are willing to assure the world that we believe in fairies and in Stuart Walker's plays we like to read *You* on the programs.

Though startled at first, we relished the newsboys dashing about the audience hawking their papers of the murder in *The Beggar on Horseback.* Because *The Spider* started with a vaudeville performance we accepted the shot from the audience, the woman who wants to leave the house, the police officers in the aisles, and the final detection of the culprit.

Yet all of us were disturbed by the voices from the audience in the auction scene of *The Skin Game.* It appears then that there are times when the audience should remain distinct from the actors on the stage. I believe that trained as we have been for several generations, we prefer to remain spectators; we have no desire to become participants in the actions; we go to the theater to share the characters' emotions vicariously. The plot, the action, the situations, the feelings will draw us in as far as we desire to go. Too far in and our esthetic pleasure is spoiled. If we laugh, if we sigh, if we hold our breath, if we tingle, if we choke up, and if we cry, we are already by that action participating much more in the emotions depicted on the stage than are the actors themselves. What beyond that should anyone strive for; what more should anyone ask? What artistic reason is there for putting actors in the auditorium? Why should the audience wish to be on the stage? The worst place from which to see a play is the side box. The stage box of continental and earlier theaters could be no worse than the boxes of a generation ago. The gallants who sat on the stage in earlier times did not get a better idea of the play than the

Her Hero. A melodramatic farce. The Heckscher Theater Players, New York.

Aladdin. Palace of the Princess. Chicago Junior League. A delightful setting is indicated by this sketch. The effect of such fantastic beauty upon child imagination justifies any amount of time and effort.

person in the first row of the porch gallery directly opposite the middle of the front.

Planting performers among the spectators is *vieux jeu* now; almost played out, in fact. Since he came to show us his tricks, we have heard less of the supreme craftsmanship of Herr Reinhardt than before. His *Dantons Tod* was a peculiar disappointment to those of us who had our hopes raised by his adulators, but nothing he subjected us to was more annoying than the ineffective yelps during the trial scenes from the members of his company distributed among the listeners in the huge Century Theater. Just as a spectator had become immersed in the fortunes of the prisoners within the enclosure on the stage, his attention would be effectually scattered by the supposedly facetious quips of the revolutionists seated near him. Not for an instant did they impress him as revolutionists; they were dressed like himself, seated in a modern American theater, with no relation to the scene being shown on the stage, where all the performers were dressed as French revolutionists. The trick—impressive years ago, perhaps, but out-moded now—totally defeated its purpose.

Such artificial devices for mixing actors and spectators have lost their novelty, and with their novelty, their excuse for employment. Today the audience and the play must be welded through the projection of the story to their sympathies.

Gone also is the kind of realism that became archeology, as in the presentation of Shakespearean drama. To which

comet or star or freshet or cold summer did Shakespeare refer in a certain play? That fact once determined—if scholars and pedants ever agreed upon it—should be borne in mind in designing costumes, for such a kind of shoe had not yet been introduced into England. What shall be the color and cut of Shylock's gabardine? The decrees of Venice are (or were) ransacked to produce a bit of realism less than worthless so far as the mood of this play is concerned.

Can there be any general rule about the realism of the settings of plays? Most modern interiors of playhouses are so indeterminate and unadorned that the imagination of the spectator may date and decorate them as needed. Yet what difference does the appearance of the auditorium make? The spectator sits in darkness with his eyes and mind concentrated upon the proscenium opening. His surroundings fade from his consciousness as the house grows dark and the audience silent. The walls and ceiling may be as frightful esthetically as any New York, London, or Paris theater; for him they no longer exist. The spell of the drama is upon him; nothing is of any consequence now except the *reality* of the effect upon his emotions made by the play about to begin.

In this—the effect upon emotions—lies the single and only necessary realism of the drama.

CHAPTER VI

LIGHTING

The first scene of Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra* has just come to a close. If you recall the scenery directions of the printed play you may wonder a little whether the sentence in the book, "The palace, an old, low, Syrian building of whitened mud, not so ugly as Buckingham Palace," has been correctly represented by the soaring tapering pylons at the four corners supporting the dark brown roof, and the four steps rising at the rear to the platform flanked by a low wall upon which an Ethiopian stood guard. The time for recollection is short, however, and as the house lights diminish the curtain rises on total darkness.

"Then the blackness and stillness breaks softly into silver mist . . . a vast horizon comes into relief broken by a huge shape which soon reveals itself in the spreading radiance as a sphinx pedestalled on the sands."

This is what the dramatist stipulates, but at this performance all you see is a dark blue glow at the rear of the stage. The light becomes gradually stronger until you perceive silhouetted against it a symmetrical straight-lined head of some sort. Yes, it must be a sphinx. There is no doubt of it now. Then in the deep shadow at the front of the stage, Cæsar begins his remarkable apostrophe to the silent watcher of the desert

sands. Before you are aware of it, the light from some hidden source (above?) has picked out some lighter mass huddled between the forepaws of the animal. You are certain that something, you know not what, is there; thus you are not completely astonished when the girlish

Photograph by John S. Neary

Luca Sarto. Normal School, Trenton

voice, after Cæsar has asked, "Have I read your riddle, Sphinx," answers so ludicrously, "Old gentleman."

There is no doubt of it;—a baby spot has been growing more powerful, and by the time Cæsar and the child are seated comfortably upon the creature's paws, you can see that part of the stage quite distinctly. How beauti-

ful the stage picture; how delicately reinforcing the lighting!

Later in the same play Cleopatra orders a slave to light the lamps beside her throne. The Nubian touches one with his torch and it begins to glow slowly into full flame. Before he can light the second, the queen's nurse orders him to stop. Only after a few lines of dialogue is he allowed to proceed with his task. How many persons give a thought to the perfect synchronization between those speeches on the stage and the hand of the electrician off-stage somewhere on the light bridge? There is little chance for applause to commend his artistic foresight and ever-present alertness; yet a slight interval, and the fault would be more difficult to cover than a delayed entrance or a wrong cue by an actor.

We are so accustomed to the marvels of electric lighting in the theater that it is impossible for us to visualize what the stage must have been without its possibilities. The relation of the gas lamps with their reflectors to the center of lighting was responsible for the curved apron, a waste space now happily relegated except in those theaters designed by antiquarians who believe that all progress is obtained by a return to an earlier form. Eighteenth century comedy and early American drama we believe quaint when we revive them below hanging chandeliers and side brackets or behind footlights with tall bent tin reflectors; but we should be desolate if we had to depend on such crude means for even our plainest full lighting. How an actor who had lived into the use of the new could

regret the old is inexplicable, yet it is reported that Sir Henry Irving violently objected to electricity, going so far as to express dislike for it, giving as his reason the assertion that he could not get with it the weird effects he wanted.

As in the designing of scenery the evolution has been to discard set and fixed forms in favor of manipulation and arrangement, so in lighting equipment the trend has been away from the stereotyped fixtures to possibilities of flexibleness, originality, and mobility. Hence the first controversy over foots or no foots, with its influence on the commercial stage in the placing of hidden spots in the footlight trough. The expedients to dispense with footlights have been myriad, all ingenious; in fact, the impression is that sometimes the ingenuity might have been expended in some other detail of production, for the result of doing without the footlights seems to have necessitated the introduction of something else in itself so obtrusive as to attract inevitably the eyes and attention of the spectators. One innovation described to me consists of oblong bread pans bought at the ten-cent store, painted black, furnished with bulbs, mounted on swivels and placed at regular or irregular intervals across the front of the stage. Aside from their lighting a room unequally and so patently concentrating their rays upon certain actors singly or in groups, they viciously call attention to themselves by sticking up some eight inches above the stage level. There is nothing wrong with the principle of their use; but they should have been masked in some

Pinocchio. Scene 2. Chicago Junior League. Elements of real charm are being injected into productions for children. Junior Leagues in other cities have offered such delights as *The Wizard of Oz*.

Photograph by Steiner-Bruehl

The Golden Cage, based on Blake's poems. The Children's School of Acting and Design, New York. Directed by Edith King and Dorothy Coit. As graceful, as charming, as gentle as the poet's lyrics.

artistic manner; or the disappearing sections bearing the regular-foots should have been turned up, and although the bulbs were not used, the strips would have served to conceal these boxes that in spite of all remain baking pans still.

An excellent illustration of how the source of light visible to the spectators was seconded by a source unseen and hardly suspected by them is afforded by *The Crows-nest* on page 226. The two seamen within the railing could be—in the rays of the lantern suspended to the mast—visible to each other, but they could hardly be seen by all spectators in the house. Therefore a spot was concealed behind the proscenium arch, in front of them and above. Its light—apparently thrown by the lantern—made the actors distinct to the entire audience.

Lights planted in fireplaces, concealed behind piles of books on library tables, suspended behind the footboards of beds, hung near the off-stage sides of scenery above doorways, directed from the sides across porches, shot through windows and doorways, and trained on easy chairs—all these are known to the most inexperienced director, and are becoming more and more "spotted" by the regular observant theater-goer, to the intensification of his own delight in plays. In this volume several of the illustrations of lighting will repay careful observation.

If you will look carefully at the sources of lighting in *Finished* (page 60) you will see how closely the natural and usual lighting of an ordinary room has been obtained. Consider how different the basic scheme of lighting for

that scene would have to be had the script called for a summer afternoon.

The two illustrations for *Finished* (page 60) show two other solutions of realistic lighting. Shadows used to be the *bêtes noirs* of stage lighting;—to some degree they remain so now. Recall where the source of light is in the corridor at the end of a sleeping car, and you will realize how skilfully and neatly the reality is reproduced in this stage replica.

There is a beauty about the scene of *On Dixon's Porch* simply obtained by flooding brilliant amber sunlight from the side. Here because the stage space is small, shadows are not crimes. (See page 94.)

When a stage is supplied with a plaster shell cyclorama there may be inconvenience in installing box sets for interiors. Why build them? Every room has a ceiling, of course, but is it necessary on the stage to show it, even to place it above the walls? In *The Skin Game* (page 190) there is no ceiling. The need for one is partly obviated by the architectural finish at the top of the scenery; it is rendered less pressing by keeping the strong lighting low upon the stage and by draping the upper reaches of the stage space with soft black curtains. If so helpful in modern sets, where realism is most usually expected (and it has been used in such plays as *A Loving Wife* and *The Wild Duck*), it is even more suitable to plays with ancient architecture. Thus it has enhanced the beauty of *The Jest* (page 173) and *Paolo and Francesca* (page 218).

Somewhat in the same category as this ancient architecture, yet different because the sets are more stylized, is the lighting for *King Lear* (page 276), for *The Sunken*

Helga and the White Peacock. Poughkeepsie Community Theater

Bell (frontispiece), and for *The Fall of the House of Usher* (page 299).

A few comments on the setting for *The Great God Brown* will vivify the lighting used in that remarkable set (page 280). As the scenery was conceived it embodied three levels, any one of which could be illuminated from sides, top, and front as suited the action, while the other two

levels with their localities remained in total darkness. On the top plane against the blue background were staged the scenes on the pier of the Casino. On the middle step—as it may be designated—the scenes in the architect offices. On the lower regular stage level the scenes in Brown's home and in Cybel's parlor. In this arrangement all the scene changes, it may be said, were made by changes in lighting.

A startling illustration of concentrated lighting in a single shaft is given in *Moontide* (page 263) in which the two figures are heightened by the macabre effect of the vivid glow from one side.

The foregoing paragraphs describe or explain the effect of the lighting as seen from the audience, but they do not explain how these startling and unusual effects are obtained or the mechanical equipment employed to originate and cast the rays, the shafts, the floods, the glows, the color.

Study the high light and the reflections in *The Fall of the House of Usher* (page 299) and note their appropriateness in mood to the weirdness of Poe's tale. The explanation of how this lighting was obtained has been sent to me by Mr. McCandless of Yale.

"The form near the top is supposed to represent a suit of armor and was made of beaver board built in several planes. As you can see from the photograph it was lighted simply from two baby spotlights from above which were supported probably about four feet from each other, just in front of this piece of setting. They had different colors in them and gave the modeling quality to the form."

Photograph by Mildred Ruth Wilson

Kai Khosru. The King-Coit School, New York. Like a brilliant page of some tiny old Persian book is this setting with its actors between five and twelve.

Photograph by Mitzi Salzmann

The Image of Artemis from the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides. Directed by Dorothy Coit. Scenery and costumes from Greek vases; designed by Edith King. Children from five to twelve. A framed stage of several levels.

Notice the charming grace of the Harlequinade picture on page 253 in which conventionalized forms of the dance pantomime are relieved by the decorative rays on the plaster dome at the rear of the stage. How when everything else has the well defined edge of silhouetted cut-outs were these forms kept so soft and mellow? Did they remain as we see them here, or did they shift and melt and strengthen and fade, as do the colors in Thomas Wilfrid's Clavilux? Mr. McCandless writes:

"The luminous glows in the background of the *White Peacock* picture were a shadow projection of a tree. At the base of the dome of our little stage we placed a four hundred watt concentrated filament lamp floodlight without reflector, and cut a pattern out of cardboard, and allowed the light to escape through this pattern in the form that you see it on the dome."

For a beautifully poetic play of the glorious past of Ireland, S. A. Eliot, Jr., designed an adequate setting at Smith College. A picture of the stage is on page 242. The scenery that surrounded the acting was simple compared with the lighting that accompanied it, designed to provide mood and atmosphere in harmony with the speeches.

The explanation of the lighting of *The House of Usna* at Smith College proves how much detailed thought and advanced planning go into the adequate preparation of a play.

"Beginning at the rear, there was a 14-socket striplight with natural blue 60-watt S-21 lamps on the floor behind the ground row. The dull, far-off blue glow of these

lamps shows as white in the illustration. Downstage from them hung a white gauze, further distancing and hazying the sky. There was no overhead light on the cyclorama. The 20-socket front border was of mixed blue and green bulbs and gave very little light. There was also a brown gauze in front of it, darkening and mistying the picture.

"Outside these two striplights and supplying all the magic and atmosphere of the production were four other single light-sources: two Pevear Wellesley Boxes, a Pevear

The Mask and the Face. Goodman Theater

9-inch Cube, and a Display Baby Hercules. The first Wellesley Box (a PS lamp with a parabolic reflector about 18 inches in diameter behind it and concentric louvers before it, so that at twenty feet it lights an area about four feet across) was at stage right, about eight feet up. There were two mediums in front of its 1000-watt lamp, one smoke (a very dark brownish red) and the other variegated—straw, green, and blue, breaking the beam up as forest leaves would break it. About as much light got through these two filters as from a 40-watt lamp, but enough to show up the faces turned toward it. The other Wellesley Box, with a 750-watt lamp, was hung above the border-

The Pied Piper. Lenox Hill House, New York. When children can be induced to live the stories they enact, they are the most graceful and absorbed performers.

Photograph by Steffel

The Pied Piper. A method of presenting scenes that might be tried more frequently. An animated silhouette, quaint as the period of the original incident.

light, twelve feet above the stage, at such an angle as to light the center of the floor without any spill upon the rear gauze. It had a smoke medium, and also one of frost and straw combined, which spread the too-concentrated spot. It was on a dimmer, and darkened or brightened in harmony with the drama's spirit. Beside it hung the Baby Hercules, also on a dimmer and working with it. The lamp in this was a 400-watt G-30, the medium, smoke alone, but rubbed with emery paper except at the center (which frosts or blurs the edge of the round spot without absorbing as much light as a frost-medium, even when oiled in the middle, absorbs), and the spot illuminated by it was about three feet in diameter, centering at the foot of the left tree-trunk.

"Conchovar played mainly in this spot: it brought out the red cape gloriously, gave the gray wig a hint of red, and deepened the old-age lines in the make-up. The Druid, Cathva, played mostly in the broader beam of the center light, which slightly warmed the silver of his hair, beard, and robe. The pipe-playing boy Maine lay up right in a light blue beam from the Pevear Cube, which was plugged into one of the borderlight sockets and suspended at the left end of the border. To soften the edge of this spot more than emery paper would do, a frost with a hole cut in it (a hole with deeply saw-toothed edges) was combined with the blue gelatine. This blue 250-watt spotlight photographs very much brighter than it looked, making the boy far more visible than he was and catching the Druid's beard with a brilliant ray, which retouching

has reduced but not subdued. In performance, the boy blended with the background, and only the figures lit by the warmer, smoke-toned lights stood out."

No two theaters have the same requirements for lighting; no two have the same kind or amount of equipment; no two have the same arrangement of similar or equivalent equipment. Every new building presents a new problem in materials for the lighting expert to solve; every new play a new problem in esthetics for the technical director to analyze.

The Pasadena Community Theater is adequately equipped for any demands that may be made upon it at any time in the near or distant future.

There are four light borders and one hundred sixteen dimmers on the switchboard that weighs six tons. In addition to such regular stage lights as the foregoing there are disappearing footlights, an electricians' gallery, and concealed spotlights in the false boxes before the sides of the stage opening. Other spotlights are concealed in the beam across the ceiling of the auditorium, so that the stage space in front of the regular opening may be illuminated. At the rear of the stage is a disappearing footlight. The bulbs throughout the theater are of four colors: white, California gold, and two new shades of red and blue used here for the first time in any theater. At the switchboard one person controls all the lighting units of auditorium and stage.

The list of fixed and movable lighting sources in another famous little theater is informative. In New Orleans Le

Photographs by Kennell-Ellis

A Midsummer Night's Dream. University of Oregon. Directed by Florence E. Wilbur. This beautiful floating stage was designed by Carl Heilborn and Floyd Runk.

Photograph by Gasquet

The Adventurer by Hugh Ross. Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré. Designed and directed by Walter Sinclair. An extraordinarily massive production. A recent version of the old Perkin Warbeck story.

Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré is prepared to produce any kind of play.

The stage is furnished with a circular cyclorama lighted from the top by hanging floodlights. There are sectional border lights, interchangeable on three circuits, each section being adjustable as a single unit. These are used most often to light the cyclorama from below, but they can be used at any part of the stage. The footlights are on four circuits. Movable lighting equipment includes strip lights, Baby Hercules spots, two 1000-watt floods on stands, two 1000-watt spots, small floods, and two soft-edge Pevear spotlights. An X-ray border hangs across the front of the proscenium. For effects directed from sides, spotlights may be fastened at any height on two vertical pipes just behind the tormentors. All lights can be put on dimmers.

In addition to this lighting localized on the stage itself, there are four spots in the auditorium to kill vertical shadows and to illuminate the faces of the actors.

At Yale the crossway beams in the ceiling of the large theater are connected with the space above the stage by a runway. In these beams are pockets of spots. At the rear of the balcony is an observation booth with telephone to the stage. Here also spots are stationed. Along the front railing of the balcony are plugs for additional spots. On the stage itself are foots of X-ray type. There are tormentor lights right and left, and stretching across above the proscenium opening is a light bridge. There are three light borders. A four-color system can be used.

This stage does not have a plaster dome, but a spattered linen cyclorama forty-eight feet by ninety feet which may be raised and lowered so that set pieces may be rolled under it.

The experimental stage has a dome, its surface spattered with yellow, magenta, and cyan blue. At its base is a light pit; thus it may be lighted from both below and

Photograph by John Steinke

In Abraham's Bosom. Karamu Theater, Cleveland

front. Scenery may be placed up to eighteen inches from the ceiling and two feet from the rear without producing a shadow. In the dome six plugs fit flush into the surface to close the holes through which drop the ropes to support a flat ceiling in a box set. In the plaster dome are sixty small openings to represent stars in the sky. A brilliant light from behind the dome makes these openings show as yellow stars in the blue heavens.

Photograph by John Steinke

In Abraham's Bosom by Paul Green. Karamu Theater, Cleveland. Directed by Rowena W. Jelliffe. A remarkable performance and production by an all-negro cast. Successful in its own small house; then moved to a larger theater.

Photograph by Julia B. Sanker

When the Cleveland Play House produced *The School for Scandal*, it built in a proscenium with side stage doors, side boxes, and lights. The scenery was reproduced from that of the original London theater. The play gained by being freed of modern accretions. Setting by Archie Lauterer.

There is an illustration of how a plaster dome is lighted from above and how a ceiling on a box set fits in before it on page 61.

Perhaps the chief defect of most lighting systems is that the manipulator of the switches has to do it blindly off-stage, depending upon his keen ear to catch cues delivered on the stage or upon some signal made to him by a watcher in an entrance. Two details of arrangement attempt to rectify this inconvenience and its resultant lapses of instantaneous synchronization. One of the devices has been already listed here:—the observation booth at the rear of the auditorium. Such a vantage station has been installed in the Theater of the Golden Bough at Carmel, California, and in the large theater at Yale. If the actual controls are centered in this booth, there is a decided advantage. If, however, it contains only signals to the worker at the switchboard, there may be chances for lost motion and time, although it is easier and safer for the technician to watch signals before his eye than to watch and listen to a distant situation within the acting area.

The Little Theater at Birmingham, Alabama, has a different arrangement. In the center of the footlights is a low shield, somewhat like the prompter's box in opera. In this, hidden from the audience, sits the lighting expert with the stage action continually before his eyes. He can follow the action from this point better than from any other. Changes are immediate and certain. In every play he is in the best position to reinforce the acting by

mood or emotional or atmospheric lighting. This device for the Birmingham house was designed by David R. Solomon.

Not by any means have all the possibilities of the effects of lighting upon the spectators been determined, but the advances in lighting made by art and technical directors all over the country are little short of marvelous.

CHAPTER VII

DESIGNING

The two most fascinating aspects of the alertness—one may almost say, the liveliness—of the non-commercial theater in this country are the rapidity with which a suitable play successful in some one organization is repeated among nearly all of the groups, and the versatile originality and amazing adaptiveness of the scenic designers. No innovation can be too radical or bizarre for their imitation; no popular mode can fade too quickly for their enthusiasm; no seeming impracticability can daunt their inventiveness; no European novelty can remain unrepeated for long; no author can make any demand they can not fulfill. Continually breaking away from the tried —whether it be the true or not—they are every week forcing their stage arrangements upon the attention of spectators and inducing editors to reproduce their designs.

So easy is it to make their work seen not only during performances, but at all other times; so sensitive has the general public become to suitableness in settings; that many producers and critics have felt that there is danger that the designer will become the spoilt child in this family of the arts.

Let Jessner in Germany show a stage with a novel arrangement to become known as *Jessners treppen* and all over the civilized world the device is adapted, imitated, and

repeated until there is danger that its general use will kill its effectiveness in those dramas for which it is best fitted.

Let Gordon Craig print a design of massive cubes, various platforms, and inviting steps, and within two years the scheme has been used for *Œdipus* in an arrangement by T. C. Pillartz (reproduced in *Design for the Theater* from an illustration in *Das Moderne Buhnenbild, Oscar Fischell*) and it sweeps from central Europe across the United States to appear most suitably in the premier of O'Neill's *Lazarus Laughed*, designed for the Pasadena Community Theater by James Hyde. (See page 272.)

No one can predict how long any one mode or method will maintain its vogue. The system of painted scenery has been in use more or less continuously since the fifth century B. C., but during the past twenty-five years every method of treating a stage set has fluctuated in prestige and number of employments. The culmination of the emphasis on the purely painted seems to have arrived with Bakst, to whom all writers on stage decoration refer in long discussions, seeming to overlook what to me is an important fact, that his chief work was not for drama at all, but for opera, dance pantomime, and ballet. As one sane English critic puts it neatly: "Bakst was the gorgeous sunset of scene-painting. In his day he was hailed as an innovator; but he was not the beginner of anything."

One is tempted to wonder whether the loud and extravagant claims made for the architectural stage, the formal platform, expressionism, and constructivism may not have to be diverted a little to some other equally

Twelfth Night. Hart House, Toronto. Directed by W. Sinclair. This set itself might appear bare, but Olivia's garden is peopled by many different characters, most of them garbed gorgeously. Formalism of line contrasted with grace and rhythm of acting.

Twelfth Night. Hart House, Toronto. Designed and directed by Walter Sinclair. A picturesque and unusual setting that does not, however, make the play more production than drama. The bold asymmetry is arresting but pleasing.

striking and unusual but successful method of setting the stage for play production.

The greatest promise of the scenic designer must lie in the number of different kinds of sets he must prepare; the necessity of not allowing himself to become fixed in one mold or mode; the requirement of doing within a short time sets for a dozen different kinds of plays. At Pasa-

On Parole. Allegheny High School, Pittsburgh

dena James Hyde has arranged the stage for such old-fashioned American material as *The Contrast*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Old Homestead*, and *Aristocracy* (pages 30, 33). Then followed *Turandot*, *The Duenna*, and *The Sunken Bell*. The entire set for *Cæsar and Cleopatra* was covered with Chinese gold paper.

For *The Sunken Bell* Mr. Hyde designed round a sunken well a stairway curving upward to stop suddenly in mid-

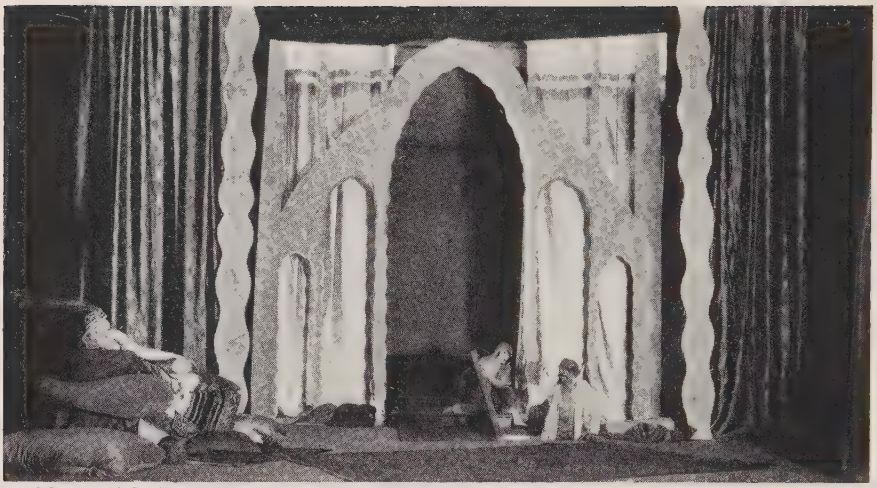
air. The eye of the spectator followed the steps upward but always had to drop again to the well on the stage level. In the few scenes where it was required the forge occupied the site of the well. To produce illusion designs were projected upon the black background:—shadows of leaves during outdoor scenes; shapes of crowded leaning houses. To produce interiors, the stairway was revolved, flats were added to determine the shape of the room.

The first constructivist setting shown in California was devised by Miss Margaret Linley for Witter Bynner's *Cake*. In the cold light of day (which is always fatal for the illusion of staging) it is described as looking like a bit of Coney Island on an off-day. But lighted, it has the novel effect of an amusement park, with its slide, its ladder, and scaffolding.

It has always seemed to me that a comparative estimate of varying modes of setting should be made upon the same play. In *Producing in Little Theaters* I suggested that some worth-while one-acts be used for such a purpose, listing "historic fidelity, the scrappy barnstorming methods of forty years ago, and stylistically." Recently a couple of experiments have shown the value of such varied treatments with the same material before the same audience.

The better known of these two experiments was that made by Mrs. Hallie Flanagan at Vassar with Chekov's often acted *The Marriage Proposal*. The three illustrations on page 181 show the treatments given this play in its three repetitions in one performance. A program note

The Contrast by Royall Tyler. Act III, Scene 2. Cornell. Directed by A. M. Drummond. Produced first in 1787, this earliest native comedy has recently been revived by several directors, always "with applause."



Photograph by Zintsmaster

Kismet by Edward Knoblock. University of Minnesota. Directed by Lester Raines. Scenery in blue with silver drapes.

explained the purpose of the productions: "For each play there exists a suitable emotional envelope: for the drama of realism, semblance of actuality; for the drama of abstract emotions, expressionism; for plays springing from such experiments as that of Soviet Russia, naïve and honest constructivism."

Produced realistically the play was essentially a comedy.

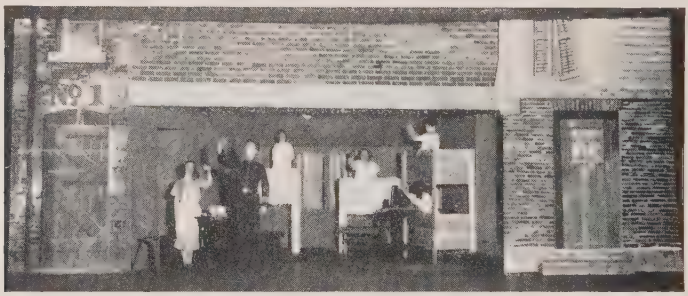
"Expressionism," the program explained, "reveals the theme of the play through actors who are abstractions of that theme, and through a setting which is an abstract comment on that theme."

As the players wore masks painted in hues to match their costumes, there was no aid from facial expression. There was obviously no individuality, for the three actors uttered their lines in monotone, though everyone preserved a tempo to characterize that rôle. The effect of this treatment upon the audience—except as a bizarre novelty—was virtually nil, according to a note in the college newspaper. The explanation of this fact is perfectly plain, it seems to me. The characters in this comedy are real people (at least Chekov enthusiasts insist that all his characters are real) yet the mode of acting, most of all the wearing of masks robbed the persons of all their personalities.

An indication of the essence of constructivism is contained in the following sentences from *Design in the Theater.*

"In the naturalistic theater, even when it concerned such fantastic plays as *The Blue Bird*, an effort is always

made to pretend that the audience is not there. The actors go about their business (such is the theory) as if the imaginary fourth wall were really built, and as if there were not hundreds of pairs of eyes fixed on their every movement. This seemed to Meierhold to be the negation of acting. He wanted the theater to be frankly theatrical, for the actor to take the audience into his confidence, not with a sly wink as Hawtrey used to do, but freely and openly. The actor came to seem very important to Meier-



Photograph by Norton Peel
A Kiss for Cinderella. Central High School, Minneapolis

hold, and the audience not less so. A captious critic might complain that this lands us once more in the middle of Bernhardtism, but Meierhold is subtler than that. He likes to draw inspiration from the Commedia dell' Arte, from the days when the actor stood on two planks at a fair, and improvised his part from a skeleton scenario. He would like to banish literature from the theater, but his practice is less extreme than his theory, and the beauty and force of his productions are generally acknowledged. He has remained one of the most vital figures in the artistic life of Russia since the revolution."

Photograph by Julia B. Sanker

The Jest by Sem Benelli. Act I. The Play House, Cleveland. Designed and directed by Frederic McConnell. Nothing in theater production could surpass the beauty, the spaciousness of these settings. The realism of Italian palaces, not cramped by small stage space, not cluttered by too much furniture. Notice the vertical sweeps of frames, doorways, and chimney.

The Duenna by R. B. Sheridan. North Shore Theater Guild. Directed by Alexander Dean. Designed by Aleyn Burtis. A unit frame set, allowing for the fourteen changes of scene with intermissions never more than a minute.

This last version found favor with the audience.

An experiment of the same kind was made at Smith College by S. A. Eliot, Jr., who presented material that does not in itself presuppose any certain kind of treatment, material that even to the most confirmed and intolerant old-timer may be set in a dozen different manners and yet not be twisted from its author's plain intent. Mr. Eliot used parts of *Twelfth Night*. There can be no realistic treatment of this, but there can be two treatments familiar to theater-goers and students of the drama—which two groups are not the same unfortunately.

The Elizabethan setting reproduced excellently the Shakespearean conditions. At the rear was the balcony rail met at its top by the modern teaser. Doors flanked the scene right and left. On the inner stage blossomed the apple tree to mark the orchard's end. Gallants on the stage and trees at the proscenium sides helped the spectators to imagine it away. The house was kept lighted. All rôles were acted by men.

The "customary conventional" production was less successful. A more usual treatment even on the commercial stage would approximate more closely such pictures as those shown on pages 165 and 166.

Quite in another class was the "modern decorative" design. The prevailing color was blue though the basal blue of the central structure (page 186) was washed over with yellow or red. If conventionalized potted plants of two dimensions will be accepted as part of Olivia's garden, there can be no impropriety in bringing Sir Andrew in

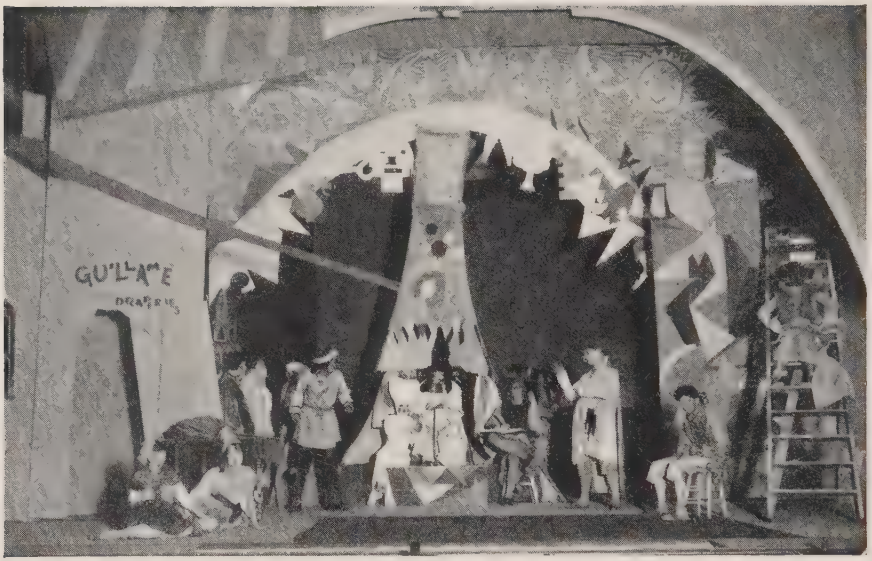
mounted on his horse, "gray Capilet," and in having Maria spy from a doll's tower casement.

Not to be confused with Shakespeare in modern dress is the constructivist version (page 186). To be entirely consistent, if one could safely predict, the characters should be clothed in costumes of the future, that future

Pinocchio. Chicago Junior League

when the world is to be machine mastered and man (as predicted by Samuel Butler in *Erewhon*) will become the slave of his own creature. The Soviet theater does not restrict itself to gymnasium apparatus, used in these two American colleges; it demands steel girders, grinding cog-wheels, swinging pulleys, creaking cranes, yet these native substitutes of ours do just as well. Russians might object to the bourgeois costumes of these actors of *Twelfth Night*, for the soldiers evidently do not belong to the Third International, and certainly plus fours and hair ribbons are symbols of the deadly aristocrat. Come to think of it,

Master Pierre Patelin. Iowa State College. Directed by Lester Raines. Costumes designed by M. Louise Arnold. Bedchamber with purple walls. Costumes of orange, yellow, blue.



Master Pierre Patelin. The market place against a vivid yellow sky. Magenta, blue, orange, and green wigs. Mrs. Patelin on the steps to her home. Actors chased up and down the aisles. Ushers, programs, and front drop in color gone riot for the evening.

Twelfth Night deals only with moneyed snobs (except Sir Toby, who was a snob without moneys) and therefore in Russia would be ruled outside the pale of constructivist drama!

Except constructivism (and it may be true of it also), every fanatically welcomed so-called *new* method of designing seems upon analysis to depend upon principles always known to the stage even if for periods not actively utilized.

Close upon the revolt against realism came the interest in doing away with all illusion. The next step to the formal stage was an easy one. Then came the influence of architectural design with the emphasis on the absence of locality. After that followed the lure of a stage with no proscenium, no curtain, no marked individuality; merely a three-dimensional structure in space. And lo! we have the architecturally backed open-air stage of ancient Greece. Somewhere along this advance backwards was the place of the remarkable permanent or semi-permanent settings, which have one outstanding quality that should recommend them to all producers:—they are cheap. In the commercial theater the great drawback to such sets is that so often these arrangements display themselves as having that quality and only that quality which induced their adoption:—they display their cheapness. In the non-commercial theater, this quality is seldom allowed to show itself, so artistic is the use made of simple materials, so beautiful are the effects obtained.

The art theater will always be more attracted by ro-

mantic, historical, poetic, and imaginative drama than by contemporary realism. Modern interiors are modern interiors, hardly anything more, their directors seem to say; there is in any instance very little opportunity for originality, very little chance for any imaginative touch. Ibsen in *Rosmersholm* specified a usual window in a usual house. Gordon Craig designed for Duse's production a tall casement entirely out of keeping with the realistic flavor of the play. She was in despair when she saw it, but the artist's insistence that it would enhance the dramatic value was borne out by the performance. Not often, however, would a director disregard the accepted conventions concerning modernity. Yet in spite of that general observation, a dozen or more illustrations in this book show how daring and skilful stage designers can be and have been with contemporary plots.

As is natural, Shakespearean plays offer the widest ranges of experimentation from attempted historical fidelity to modern dress. The list of the latter grows apace; begun in England with *Cymbeline*, it now includes *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *As You Like It*. The method is spreading to other plays; Cornell has done Sheridan's *The Critic* with modern dress and settings, one of which shows a Spanish fleet attacked by British airplanes.

The productions designed for children (in rare instances, by children) display elements of beauty seldom attained on the regular stage. The stage for *Aucassin and Nicolette* designed by Edith King was like a page from an

The Marriage Proposal by Anton Chekov. Vassar Experimental Theater. General direction by Hallie F. Flanagan. Technician, Howard Wicks. Realistic setting by Mary Trevett. Expressionistic setting by Margaret James. Constructivistic setting by Rosalind Howe.

Photographs by Margaret de M. Brown

old French book of hours. This same artist's designs for all the plays presented by the King-Coit School will repay study:—*Kai Khosru*, like a brilliant Persian page; *The Image of Artemis* with costumes and details after Greek vases; *The Golden Cage* as naïve as any verses Blake ever penned and illustrated. (Pages 142, 147, and 148.)

The Merchant of Venice—once again upon the professional boards—admits of as many different modes of

Greenwich Academy, Connecticut

treatment as any play that may be considered. The chief difficulty is to overcome the broken sensation from the frequent changes of scenery. Carroll College at Waukesha, Wisconsin, presented this comedy in adequate scenes designed by Miss May N. Rankin.

The first two acts showed a public place before Shylock's house. A massive old wall with a central archway of Siena marble ran diagonally across stage; above it was the clear Venetian sky. At the left was the Jew's shut-

tered house with its wrought iron knocker on the weather-beaten door. The public fountain (so often provided in this play) made a center for conversing groups.

The third act showed Portia's room hung in soft gray-blue curtains twenty feet high. Three long narrow windows were formed by parting the curtains and catching them back near the top with gold cords. The openings gave glimpses of the raised balcony and the sky. Upon this balcony three musicians played while the suitors were choosing the casket. When the curtains concealing the caskets were drawn aside there was a view of amber and rose reflected in the long loose folds of ivory satin. The single doorway in this room was fifteen feet high.

For the courtroom the walls were wainscoted in brown panels.

The fifth act, Portia's garden, was bordered in the rear by a low platform with a marble wall and silhouetted trees. A flight of steps and an archway led to the house.

A similar employment of draperies and accessories to set entirely different scenes is illustrated by the three pictures (page 97) for the period play *Luca Sarto* as produced at the Trenton Normal School.

Italy spontaneously suggests to designers spacious stretches of stone walls, soaring arches, deep recesses, angled steps, thick masonry, strong lights, and dark shadows. Among such plays as D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini*, Phillips's *Paolo and Francesca*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, his *Romeo and Juliet*, Benelli's *The Jest*, and the Yale *Machiavelli* there is inevitably a resemblance.

Photographs by Eric Stahlberg

Twelfth Night. Smith College. Directed by S. A. Eliot, Jr. Elizabethan style; all-male cast of Amherst students. Gallants on the fore-stage, apple tree in bloom marking the location as "the orchard's end." Auditorium lighted.

Customary production. Directed by Ruth Cooper. Prevailing color, warm brownish yellow.

Photographs by Eric Stahlberg

Twelfth Night. Modern decorative. Directed by O. W. Larkin. Curtains blue. Romantic scenes in blue light, with music; clown scenes in red-amber light. Special effects, green and red spotlights.

Constructivist. Directed by S. A. Eliot, Jr. Wheelbarrow, platforms, ladders, barrel, vertical poles often used for entrance, the characters sliding down from the bridge above the borderlight; incline up left for exit; the rings and the horizontal bars for gym stunts.

The director who plans in a season to mount one of these plays may look forward to a second season in which adaptations and decorations will utilize the setting designed and built with an outlay that a single use would make prohibitive. At the University of Louisville a thoroughly adequate—and what is more significant, beautiful—setting was devised for *Romeo and Juliet.* The few illustrations here reproduced on pages 203, 204, and 205, show how carefully the various units were fitted, interchanged, concealed, revealed, and manipulated. This multiplex set cost $3500, a sum that most organizations would consider quite beyond their resources. Yet at the University of Louisville, within a year, this set with a few immaterial alterations fully served in *Paolo and Francesca.* There were a few added units, but the chief reliance for differences was upon the new arrangements and the uses of new colorings. Very likely only a few keenly observant critics recognized the former settings in the latter. (Pages 207, 208, and 214.) This second unusual production required the outlay of only a few hundred dollars; doubtless, future seasons will see units appearing over and over again.

The designing of any portion of a so-called classic of the theater is a delicate problem. *Doctor Faustus* has been produced as a specimen of early Elizabethan dramaturgy; it has been staged with every scenic and electrical device the modern theater affords. Shall naïveté or sophistication be the guiding principle? The playhouse that offers *Macbeth* in a single architectural setting with changes

only in the lighting (page 275) may in the same season announce *The School for Scandal* stripped of all the accretions of characterization and stage business that have come to overload it and with a return to reproductions of the original London setting. This will entail building a false proscenium with stage doors right and left, stage boxes above them, and hanging chandeliers with their wrongly directed lighting. No box sets are used; the profiled edges of the wings stick squarely and plainly into the rooms and actors deliberately make entrances and exits by walking straight through the places where the walls should be. (Page 160.)

Stage boxes would be a frightful annoyance in the theater today, yet they do add something to the effect of plays first performed in theaters having them. There seems to be a revival of interest in the eighteenth century (*She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Rivals*, and *The Beaux' Stratagem* have reached the professional theater recently); we may see several of the comedies of manners. The same desire to test the power of earlier American writing that resurrected *Fashion* has sent several directors to try the earliest native American comedy, *The Contrast* by Royall Tyler. (See page 169.)

No one method remains long in possession of the contemporary art theater. Beautiful and decorative sets have been condemned by G. B. Shaw. "The most advanced audiences cannot drop back into decoration after a moment of earnest life. . . . The decorative play must step down to the second-class audience."

Beyond the Horizon by Eugene O'Neill. Little Theater, Dallas. Directed by Oliver Hinsdell. Virtually every acting group in the country has produced this tragedy, many of them adhering much more closely to the text and intention than did the professional production in New York.

Photograph by Clifford Norton

The Skin Game by John Galsworthy. Act I. The Play House, Cleveland. Directed by Frederic McConnell. Designed by Archie Lauterer. Does a room need a ceiling? Not if the background can be kept totally black and the lighting close to the acting area.

What then of the future? Futurism? An echo of the theories and practices of the Italian Marinetti?

Photograph by A. Tennyson Beals

The Happy Prince. Henry Street Settlement, New York

James Laver in the volume, *Design in the Theater*, edited by Geoffrey Holme, London, 1927, sums up the (to date) latest influence in the following sentences.

"After the Revolution in Russia, Futurism became an official art, and artists of the advanced schools found wonderful scope for their talents, not only in the theater, but in organizing popular manifestations, military reviews, and open air fêtes. The destruction and disorder which was everywhere apparent gave birth to Constructivism, which was partly the result of a desire to reorganize and stabilize life, and was partly an echo of the theories of Marinetti, the Italian Futurist. Men had no sooner convinced themselves of the dangers of mechanical civilization, than they began to be enamoured of the esthetic properties of machines. The machine, it was thought, was the symbol of the Present, and even theatrical *décor* ought to stress the dominance of pulleys and wheels and pistons. 'Constructivism' for Tairov developed into a system of stage scaffolding, and the various actions of a play took place at different levels, up flights of wooden steps, across ladders, or on little jutting platforms far above the stage. Decoration was reduced to the frankly symbolic, to an almost mathematical abstraction. For certain modern plays, especially those which are assumed to take place in a factory or workshop, Constructivism may be very effective, but it is hardly a universal formula, and has indeed been already abandoned by some of its chief exponents."

CHAPTER VIII

MULTIPLE SETS

When the student of the history of the theater is not urging a return to Greek sculptured architecture he is likely to be lamenting the good old days of the Middle Ages when the imagination of the people was so fertile that it stirred at the miracle and morality plays acted within the church arches or upon crude platforms drawn about the town streets. For the material, the stories (they can hardly be dignified by the word plots), the acting they beheld, the peasants and guilders doubtless had enough imagination; but certainly if our drama today had no more sophistication, no more complication, no more philosophy, no more criticism of life, we should call ourselves stupid indeed.

When we revive these old mysteries, moralities, miracles, and passions, or the later historically important dramas (*The Second Shepherd's Play*, *Noah*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *Patelin*, *Comus*) we are less interested in the characters and the drama than we are in the method of writing, the crudity, the mechanics, and the modern method of treatment, whether it be frankly modern or an attempt to reproduce (always impossible) the method contemporary with the popularity of the play. We gaze upon such novelties as museum pieces; we are glad to say that we have seen them, the

emphasis upon the completed action being more a record of duty done than recollected enthusiasm. Most—not all—of the plays discussed at length in history of drama courses prove to be weak and dull theater now.

For interested and trained audiences, there is no doubt of the value of introducing such novelties among the assured successes of a varied season. Some spectators never "get them," never understand what they are about, or why they are done. Even the screaming ludicrousness of *Fashion* made some unprepared visitors doubt the sanity of the convulsed members of the audience. "If this be what the non-commercial theater offers," they said and wrote, "give us such good plays as *Coquette* and *Broadway*." They were as ill-fitted to appreciate antiquarianism in the theater, as is the modern who goes to see *The Trojan Women* without knowing the occasion that caused its writing.

The disposition to return to the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth or some other time at least as long ago has resulted in the construction of theaters and stages to recall those periods. Tudor architecture has framed the far projecting curtainless stage. Stage fronts have been replaced by steps to the house level; little penthouses have been built out at right and left to permit doors to open for entrance and exit, balconies have been constructed at the rear (necessitating extra scenery or hangings for most plays performed), and sources of lighting that called attention to their presence have been devised and installed. I have tried to understand why the per-

Macbeth. Leland Stanford. Directed by Gordon Davis. Designed by Leslie Kiler. Space relationships well utilized in both of these scenes.

The Tidings Brought to Mary by Paul Claudel. Carnegie Institute. Directed by E. Martin Browne. Designed by Thomas Fisher, Mitchell Blistein, Abe Feder, John Walker, Arthur Sprenkle.

manently fixed stage of Le Vieux Colombier in Paris is so much better than a spacious bare platform, but I have never succeeded. When I have attended performances in this theater, I have seen nothing accomplished by its architectural fixtures that could not have been better realized by platforms and scenery, and once the glaring contrast between the realistic acting and the actual objects

Photograph by Kenyon and Crow

R. U. R. Leland Stanford

near the front of the stage with the broadly painted back drops (down front was a telephone, but on the back drop a small case of books was badly painted) threw the entire production off key. So far as production was concerned, the only aim apparent to me was that of economy.

As modern dramatists—the progressive radicals, at least—are no longer going to be bored by the three and four act rule with one or two settings only, directors with limited budgets will make a virtue of necessity and draw

from the possibilities of earlier methods anything they can utilize to serve their purposes. The single set play is extremely popular throughout the country; the range of quality is a wide one:—*Seven Keys to Baldpate, He Who Gets Slapped, Hell Bent fer Heaven, Children of the Moon, Outward Bound, Candida, The Dover Road, March Hares, Minick.* Some of the plays worth most effort and productive of best impressions, however, do not fall into such a classification. They demand much more; they challenge mechanical and artistic skill; they attract and sway audiences; they serve as the other play can not some of the essential reasons for which non-commercial playhouses are patronized. The later plays of Eugene O'Neill are good illustrations; their stories go anywhere. *Marco Millions* has thirteen scenes; *Lazarus Laughed* has seven; *Emperor Jones* has seven; *The Hairy Ape* has seven; even *Desire Under the Elms*, though its action is localized just outside and within a New England house, has eleven changes among the garden and four rooms separately exposed to view. Other dramatists have been as fragmentary and miscellaneous. Long ago there were protests against the fleetingness—in spite of the beauty—of the scenes of Maurice Maeterlinck. *Pelleas et Melisande* has fifteen scenes. An experimentalist disdains to be bound by any once-accepted conventions. Mr. Shaw, who could write *Getting Married* within all the unities, allowing no fall of the curtain even, in *Saint Joan* went back to the old chronicle play form and divided his story into seven scenes. Mr. Galsworthy's *Loyalties* has five scenes, his

Torches by Kenneth Raisbeck. Greensboro College, North Carolina. Directed by Elba Henninger. Renaissance Italy continually attracts authors and directors.

Photograph by Kennell-Ellis

The Cradle Song by Gregario M. Sierra. University of Oregon. Directed by Florence E. Wilbur. One of the few good plays that may be done outdoors.

Escape has ten scenes; *Liliom* has six scenes; Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* has seven; Edward Knoblock's *The Lullaby* has six; Lenormand's *The Failures* has fourteen scenes; Lord Dunsany's *If* has nine scenes; *Beggar on Horseback* has a dozen or more.

All of these listed plays are more or less the kind on which the non-commercial theater thrives. Setting them becomes a delight in the planning and a joy in the result.

The picture stage, which is visited with discouraging comments by those who favor a return to Greek structures, is a return-to-the-past solution of the many-setting play. In the palmy days the side wings and borders were accepted as conventional parts of stage furnishings. Roll up the back drop framed by them, put a few bits of furniture before the newly exposed one, and the changes are easily provided. Or keep the stage set for the most often used scene and drop a painted cloth in front of it. This scheme or modifications of it are illustrated in the pictures of *Old Homestead* (page 30), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (page 33), *White Wings* (page 250), *The School for Scandal* (page 160), and *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* (page 79).

Built scenery costs more than painted drops, but if constructed in unit sizes, the parts are capable of many more uses and longer service than the canvas scenes. Plays of the Middle Ages and Renaissance Italy are capably housed by such structures. The yawning archways, the twisting stairs, the soaring walls, the tall window openings, with their awesome shadows are the perfect scenes for poetic tragedy like *Romeo and Juliet*,

even Oriental comedy like *Kismet* and modern farce like *The Firebrand.* Likewise, archways and galleries will suffice for seventeenth and eighteenth century plays. It was the English artist, C. Lovat Fraser, I believe, who first so cleverly made one permanent set serve for both exterior and interior. His production of *The Beggar's Opera* at Hammersmith (it ran for longer than three years) was one of the most colorful and tuneful delights the stage has given us. Many who attended—not sophisticated enough to be allured by the place and significance of the drama in the development of theatric art—were bored because it did not duplicate musical comedy or revue effects. The removal of panels painted as windows with views, the raising of the chandeliers, the disappearance of the few articles of furniture, the placing of two lanterns above arched doorways, and what had been a room became a street. (See page 42.) These same massive, arched, stone units are not out of place in settings for modern realistic plays.

It is an astonishing fact that during the long period when costuming and setting Shakespearean plays was a test of archeological research, no investigator or artist seems to have stumbled upon the realistic value of hangings or draperies. There are productions of Shakespearean plays that I can remember in which hangings, either plain or tapestried, were painted upon the flats or the canvas drops. Excellent illustrations of this kind of realistic reproduction scenery are in *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, George C. D. Odell, Volume II, pages

Photograph by Standiford

Romeo and Juliet. University of Louisville. Designed by Rollo Wayne. Directed by Boyd Martin. All the various sets of this play will repay close study. Striking combinations of curved and straight lines emphasizing height.

Romeo and Juliet. Act V, 2. University of Louisville. Designed by Rollo Wayne. Directed by Boyd Martin. A score of pictures would be needed to display all the effective adaptations of this partly fixed, partly flexible stage setting. Much of its effectiveness is due to the simple unobtrusive manner in which it removes some of the action from the stage level.

438 and 446. The scenery constructors missed completely the chance to combine historical fitness, cheapness of supply, beauty of effect, and ease of transportation. The little theaters adopted this method at once, and for several years treated us almost too regularly to interiors and exteriors within dull gray drapes. A pleasing varia-

Romeo and Juliet. Model

tion was the use of black curtains instead of tan and gray. Effects with these became too numerous to list, but their effectiveness in blacking out an unused space on the stage is shown in the interior setting of *The Skin Game* on page 190 and of *King Lear* on page 276.

The medieval plan of simultaneous settings arose from the original platforms within the church building. Sketches of these arrangements are in most histories of the theater

and of the drama, as E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, Volume II, pages 83 and 84; A. Nicoll, *The Development of the Theater*, pages 65 and 67. Simultaneous settings became fixed in the medieval and later mind as the way to set plays. Outside the church edifice, the plan was still followed, certainly on the continent of Europe. At Valenciennes in 1547 a passion play was acted on a stage with ten different places shown simultaneously:—Paradise, Nazareth, the Temple, Jerusalem, the Palace, the House of Bishops, the Golden Portal, the Sea, Limbo, and Hell. There are pictures of this in the Nicoll volume page 71, in Brander Matthews, *A Study of Drama*, page 292; in Sheldon Cheyney, *Stage Decoration*, plate 13.

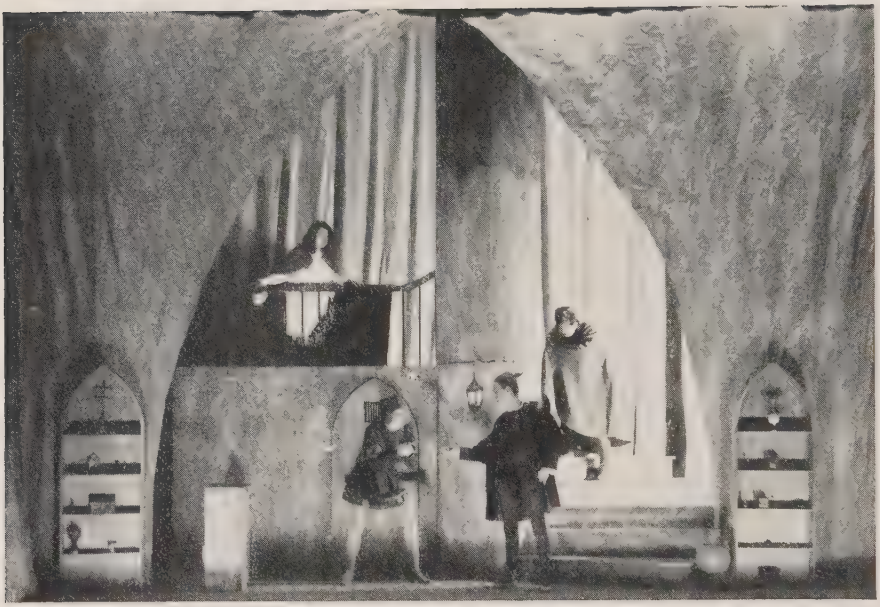
About the year 1633 a French designer, Mahelot, adapted the principle of this multiple setting to regular indoor performances. One of his designs is illustrated in the volume by Sheldon Cheyney, plate 21. The artist's description of his arrangement is no less helpful than the drawing itself.

"There must be in the middle of the stage a beautiful palace; and at one side a sea on which appears a ship rigged with masts and sails whereon a woman appears and throws herself into the sea; and at the other end a pretty room which opens and closes, where there is a bed made up with sheets."

In the volume by A. Nicoll is another sketch by this same artist, Mahelot, showing a multiple setting for *Pandoste*, a drama on the same theme as Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (p. 117). Here the French play has everything necessary upon the stage at once. "To the

Photograph by Standiford

Paolo and Francesca by Stephen Philips. Act I. University of Louisville. Produced and designed by Boyd Martin. Portions of this setting were used in earlier performances of *Romeo and Juliet*. This illustration should be compared with pictures on pages 203, 204, and 205. The draperies become the tapestries of old Italian palaces.



Photograph by Standiford

Paolo and Francesca. University of Louisville. Pulci's Shop. This illustration should be compared with that on page 218. The two exemplify the variety of possibilities for a single scene.

left of the audience is a painted sea; immediately behind it appears the temple of Delphi. The back of the stage is occupied by the Palace of Epirus, while the right-hand side contains a prison. In all probability the representations of these various *maisons* or *case* were in relief, Serlio-wise, constructed of frames of wood covered with painted canvas, and some at least were practicable . . . All sorts of buildings and of scenes were set on the stage in this manner and there were even rooms, no doubt with a 'fourth wall' knocked away. One *belle chambre* has in it *une table, deux tabourets, une écritoire.*"

The various practicable features of this setting were a window from which a letter was handed out, a knotted rope for descending from a tower, and a drawbridge that could be lowered. There was even a *perspective* where there were two passages between the two houses.

The only thing that a Mahelot design would need to make it thoroughly modern is electric lighting to allow blacking out most of his stage while attention is concentrated by emphasized lighting on the acting area.

An approach to this kind of simultaneous setting was made in New York in 1922 in a terrible farrago entitled *Johannes Kreisler* imported from Germany during the attempt to make a star of Jacob Ben-Ami. The "fantastic melo-drama" was so lugubrious that all its elaborate setting, its music, and its method of presentation counted for nothing.

An entirely successful use of the simultaneous set, although it entailed the slight change of removing va-

rious" fourth walls" is in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms.*

The stage designs of Gordon Craig can seldom be identified as belonging to any definite plays or methods, but one of them, in spite of the strain on the imagination to comprehend their simultaneous or even sequential need is entitled *A Palace, a Slum, and a Stairway.*

In *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* Robert Edmond Jones achieved signal success several years ago by disregarding the directions written by Anatole France, by changing what the author described as an interior to an exterior, then by displaying the necessary interior by providing a large open window in the wall of the house. The resultant set was not only novel but much cheaper than the specified interior would have been. One flat wall as large as the single rear wall of the room was virtually all that was required.

For *Pueblo* at Yale Donald Mitchell Oenslager devised a series of unusual sets which cunningly realize the essential similarity between the cliff dwellers of the Indian Southwest and the cliff dwellers of city apartments. The same step-like levels rise in the pueblo above the stretch of the country and in the apartment above the tops of surrounding buildings in the city. This recurrence of the same shape throughout the successive acts of the play makes for cumulative sense of unity—a dramatic sense, a sense better than the merely mechanical and spatial unities of time and place. The illustrations on pages 117 and 118 show this underlying identity.

Photograph by Eric Stahlberg

The Faithful by John Masefield. Act II. Smith College. Designed by Margaret Linley (now Head of Production for Gilbert Miller). Directed by Samuel A. Eliot, Jr.

Photograph by Eric Stahlberg

The Faithful by John Masefield. Smith College. The interior set: Kira's House. Directed by Samuel A. Eliot, Jr. and Cheryl A. Crawford. This set was disclosed when the curtain with the snow scene was removed.

Several years ago The Theater Guild at its Garrick Theater set *The Tidings Brought to Mary* in a permanent setting that allowed the posing of attractive groups, but did absolutely nothing for the slight dramatic value of the play. The story was stylized out of existence. Much more in keeping with the intent and locale of the play were the scenes designed for it at Carnegie Institute. The sets can hardly be called multiple; they are, more accurately, semi-permanent, with the dominating mount always present in the sight and consciousness of the audience. The rapid changes of scenery accentuated the rhythm of the rapidly developing scenes. (Page 196.)

A permanent framework with two small and two larger archways allowed for the fifteen changes in Sheridan's *The Duenna* with intervals never longer than a minute. (See page 174.)

The same principle of open and masked archways is beautifully displayed in the two views of the Yale production of *Machiavelli* (pages 221 and 222). In the second picture the fireplace has traveled across the width of the stage; the small closed door has become a grilled aperture; where two wide doorways gave into a dining hall hangings now decorate the walls; the stairway is closed by the canopy and platform of the Cardinal. Yet not a single flat piece of scenery has been changed.

The permanent columns of *Turandot* (pages 230 and 233) suggest another treatment. Some sets are far behind these pillars; others are flush with them and supported

Paolo and Francesca. University of Louisville

by them; other scenes are before draperies or screens fastened to them.

The Cleveland Play House architectural stage for *Macbeth* is really a multiple set changed only by manipu-

lating the lighting and varying the area of acting. The Witches used the steps. A glow behind the middle platform indicated the cauldron. Images supposed to rise from it were cast in brilliant colors against the center pylon by a lantern behind the steps. With such a stage (see page 275) production became at once much more important than the play. The most risky detail was the moving woods—a single line of soldiers bearing silhouettes of what, arborically, seemed to be short Lombardy poplars. Perhaps the supernatural element in *Macbeth* cannot be symbolized or stylized; at any rate *King Lear* with the setting shown on page 276 is much better as tragedy. This single platform and mounting column concentrate action as few other settings succeed in doing.

In a totally different manner the expressionistic scenery for *The Doctor's Dilemma* at the Pasadena Community Playhouse gains multiform effects at a minimum of stage construction. In this design, as in so many that are emotionally impressive, the stage must be supplied with telling furniture and properties (notice the paintings and the panel around the bare stage) and decorated with sympathetic light. (See page 295.)

The Greeks had little scenery. Shall a modern production of a Greek play have only a permanent background as have *Œdipus Rex* and *Medea* (pages 267 and 268); arrangements of massed pieces as designed by Mr. Rychtarik (pages 292 and 294); or an ingeniously devised yet beautifully proportioned multiple set such as that for *The Image of Artemis* (page 148)? Here in this last is

nothing—if we may believe the archeologists—that an ancient Greek performance would have recognized;—the background is apparently a curtain, the stage has two levels, the ocean shore is a cardboard profile with conventionalized fish too plainly seen, a practicable ship has just been pushed on from the side; yet there is more of the essential beauty of form and grace of grouping in this shallow stage than in many of the strongly colored realistic revivals in ancient classic manner with the speeches in the original Greek and the actors clad in wool woven with their own hands on the soil of Greece itself. Such revivals as those of Augustin Duncan may have been more nearly correct archeologically; they were not more beautiful dramatically.

The non-commercial playhouse—called art theater or not—must be more resourceful and more artistic than the regular theater. One of the best ways of studying a play comparatively is to see it performed by a metropolitan company and as soon as possible afterwards by an artistic local organization. In nearly every instance the acting of the amateurs (in the best sense of that word) may be inadequate. The local group has not the range of looks, ability, and endurance from which to choose. With all possible allowances made, the non-commercial production will always be the more interesting.

When Mr. O'Neill's unsettling play *The Great God Brown* was offered a few years ago in New York it was sympathetically prepared; the cast was a good one; the actors acquitted themselves as well as could be expected

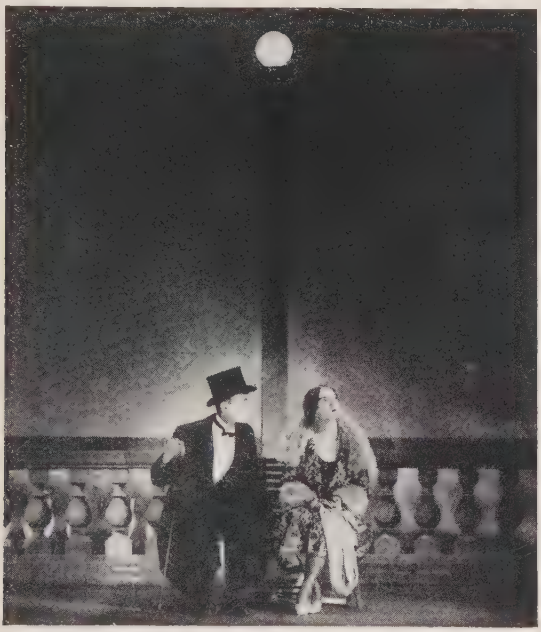
Don Juan by Molière. Goodman Theater, Chicago. Directed by Thomas Wood Stevens.

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Directed by Whitford Kane. Both designed by Leslie Marzolf.

Paolo and Francesca by Stephen Phillips. Francesca on her way to church. Hart House, Toronto. Neutral background spotted by the brilliant costumes of a passionate age.

Designed and directed by Walter Sinclair. A dingy Italian basement with massive walls plainly shown by off-stage lighting. For another setting see page 208.

under the handicap of having to clap on and pull off their false faces; yet for some reason, the drama did not quite "come off." The play as drama seemed to disintegrate after the murder of Dion Anthony. Critics cited this strange drop in appeal as the play became more and more symbolic or mystic, as you prefer your own explanation



The Green Scarf. Cornell

or that printed by the playwright. Several critics complained about the settings, one at least dubbing them mere samples of scenery. They were small sets between pushed out tormentors; the stage openings were very narrow.

The treatment of the scenery was extremely realistic. The Pier of the Casino was backed by a blue curtain; it was flanked by an iron rail; it was marked by an inartistic

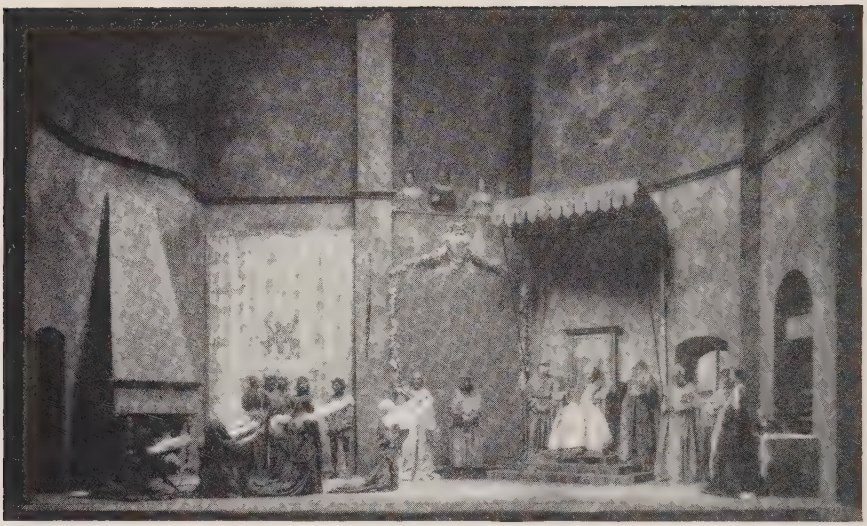
iron lamppost. There was no doubt about Brown's private office; his library was a library; Cybel's parlor was everything that word connotes for a lady of easy morals; Cybel's nickel-in-the-slot piano had plainly ground out its wheezy tunes for years in a run-down saloon or less moral place.

The urge to toy with masks or act seriously with them has swept across the land, and thus *The Great God Brown* has found favor with producing groups. Yet a single glance at the pictures of the two methods of setting the stage for it illustrate as well as any one thing can the wide gulf between the ideals and principles of the two theatrical controls. (See pages 279 and 280.)

The Cleveland Play House built an artistic, beautiful multiple set on the single plan of three steps. Here all the thirteen scenes of the play could be shown; all of them within direct focus of the spectators; not crowding at some small section of the platform space as would be necessary in a medieval multiple setting.

In the actual performance vertical and horizontal shafts of light illuminated brightly the acting area and reduced the other sections to darkness; but the photograph shows the three sections at once. Against the blue back wall the persons in the pier scenes stood on the highest level, seating themselves upon the low steps, instead of sprawling on the stage boards as the professionals did. Just below were the sections right and left of the draughting room and private office. And below, with its piano at the rear was Cybel's parlor, the large space which

Machiavelli by Lemist Esler, Yale. Setting by Donald Mitchell Oenslager. Recesses, archways, the banquet hall, the balcony, and the stairway give an effect of magnificence that many professional stages would fail to produce.



Machiavelli. Act III, Scene 2. Most of this setting remained throughout the play, but sections were shifted. The characters in the balcony emphasize the action on the stage.

with slightly different groupings of chairs and tables became the Anthony sitting-room or the Brown library. The curtain could not fall at the act ends, intermissions could be eliminated or shortened, thus making the action still more concentrated.

The programs emphasize the difference between the two methods. While the New York sheet lists all the acts with their numerous scene divisions, the Cleveland page, taking it for granted that the audience would recognize a locality after having seen it once, bore this short note:

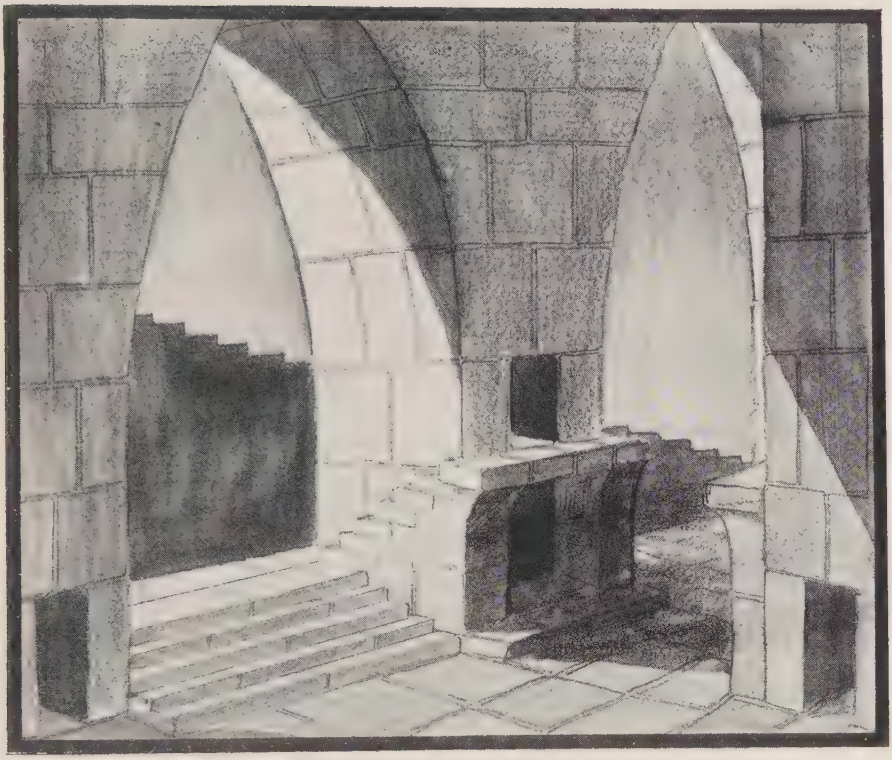
"The play is staged in six parts, the action taking place variously at the Hut of the Casino; Margaret Anthony's sitting-room; William A. Brown's draughting room; Cybel's parlor, and William A. Brown's library."

CHAPTER IX

THE PLAYS

Several years ago, persons asked themselves frequently the question, "Why go to the theater?" and asked it during the regular winter season. A few years ago, had they been interrogated if they cared for plays in the summer, they very likely would have retorted with the question, "Why go to the theater in the summer?" Yet within those few years even professional producers have learned that the theatrical appetite does not pall with the coming of warm weather. Several cities (Denver, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Cincinnati) have been able to draw audiences to stock or repertory theaters, often forming a small circuit around which the leading actors and actresses, known as having played the title rôles first on Broadway, have moved.

The dramatic schools and studio workshops first carried away to summer resorts the idea that persons will both act and patronize acting when they are on vacations. As summer sessions in colleges and universities grew, the plan of offering summer instruction under experts in theater arts spread and increased in popularity. There must be now literally more than a hundred places where in the summer enthusiastic play lovers can continue their practices and improve their ability. But practice and skill must have the outlet of performance; therefore,



Dalibor by Bedrick Smetana. Designed by Richard Rychtarik. For the six acts of this opera the artist has provided several changes. The center pylon is on a wagon. Curtains close the arches. Curtain closes the left corridor. A platform between the fireplace and the support. Removable center of fireplace top. Throne platform filling the corridor.

Photograph by Tallmadge

The Crowsnest by William Manly. Carroll College, Waukesha, Wisconsin. Directed by a pupil of May N. Rankin. Iron framework and pulleys stretched a cyclorama. A reefed sail, a few ropes; a lantern reënforced by a spot.

every one of these summer studios has become a producing group.

The summer may be bare of drama in Boston, but a citizen of that former Athens assures me that thousands of Boston dwellers can attend scores of performances if they happen to be near either Gloucester or Provincetown. And there are very likely other towns in the vicinity where plays may be seen. One resort in Maine has become a recognized and repeatedly used try-out town for later New York possibilities. A tiny settlement on a seacoast town in Maine in one summer season of eight weeks provided an opening bill of three one-acts, followed by *Galatea* (Gilbert), *The Patsy*, *The Romantic Age*, *Nan*, *Pomeroy's Past*, *Husbands Are a Problem*, and *Tea for Three*. Of some of these as many as five performances had to be given before all the audiences had been accommodated.

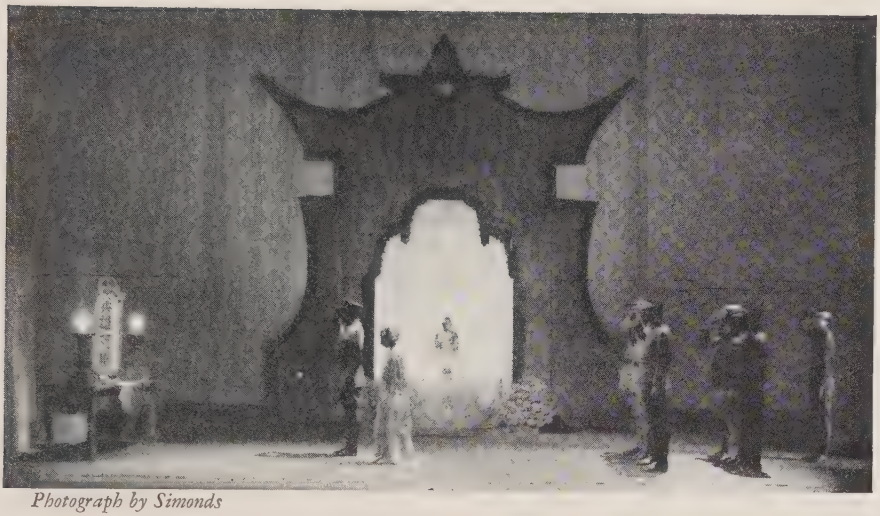
The records of the summers in every way confirm the hopeful and encouraging indications of dramatic alertness supplied by records of the winters in non-commercial organizations.

In both college and community groups the growth has been healthy rather than forced. It need not be recalled that colleges and universities have always produced plays of a kind—or some kinds—but it is hardly longer than fifteen years ago that the faculties began grudgingly in some places, gladly in others, to welcome play production as an educative effort equal to an academic course in reading or as a supplementary activity worth as much as athletics or music.

The records today—in the light of the national enthusiasm—make fascinating study. Here is one university list in which in the first season one play was given—*You Never Can Tell.* Had Shaw been accepted in 1914 by the professors of the history of drama, most of whom could discuss placidly on the textual emendations in Shakespeare or the Renaissance mistreatment of the three unities,

Romeo and Juliet. Berkeley High School, California

but few of whom were aware of the renascence of interest in the English speaking theater? It is easy to imagine the tremors of that producer who hoped that *You Never Can Tell* would not be too frivolous for circles that cited Congreve's name but could not have told on a wager whether any one of his plays would act today. But one play a season was a beginning: *You Never Can Tell*, then *Mice and Men.* So they run along until the number rises to three:—*Her Husband's Wife, Monna Vanna* (that must



Photograph by Simonds

Peking Politics by J. Wong-Quincey. Act III, Scene 3, Yale. Setting by Harold Helvenston. An enigmatic East where the old and the new are meeting. Poignant, as no Westerner's play of China could be.

Turandot. Outside the city gates. Hart House, Toronto. Designed and directed by Walter Sinclair. The whole theater has been drawn into the stage decoration. For this story, decoration is all-important.

have raised a disturbance), and *The Truth*. The next year the record jumps to five:—*Mama's Affair*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Little Women*, *Pillars of Society*, and *Only Thirty-eight*. For five years now that number has been maintained, always with betterment in the producing features and in the acting, and always with increased understanding and patronage among the students and citizens.

Literary and dramatic excellence have not been sacrificed to mere drawing popularity. There are a few such trifles as *Mama's Affair* and *The Big Idea* among the titles; but any list that includes *Don*, *Hobson's Choice*, *Dover Road*, *Bonds of Interest*, *The Swan*, *Hell Bent fer Heaven*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Children of the Moon*, and *Paolo and Francesca* will stand comparison with any other for the same years.

Here is another record:—sixty-three productions in seven seasons. As in the former example, the number of productions has shown a steady increase. For the first two years six each season; then seven; then nine for each of two years; then a stupendous jump to seventeen in the seventh season.

In a small college a stretch of seven years shows thirty-eight different plays. The beginning is excellent, *You Never Can Tell*, with a slump next to *What Happened to Jones*. The early entries indicate frequent vacillations between recognized merit and popular appeal, between full-length drama and one-acts; the later entries settle down to a policy of long plays of proved excellence:—

Craig's Wife, *Arms and the Man*, *Expressing Willie*, *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire*, *Candida*, and *Chantecler*.

In Dallas, the Little Theater, only for the latter part of the season of 1927–28 adequately housed, has given sixty-eight plays in eight years. The Pasadena Community Playhouse, likewise moving and "putting-up-with" for several years, gave two hundred fourteen plays in nine years, and some of those plays ran for a number of performances:—*Liliom*, twenty-two times; *Melloney Holtspur*, fourteen times; *Hassan*, fourteen times; *He Who Gets Slapped*, fourteen times; *Passing of the Third Floor Back*, eighteen times; *The Potters*, nineteen times; *The Swan*, eleven times; *The Torch Bearers*, twenty-one times; *Why Marry?* eleven times; *You Never Can Tell*, eleven times; *Major Barbara*, eleven times. These are merely random instances of good plays by this organization well patronized by the community.

At the same time that the dramatic taste of the audience has been improving there has been a decided trend away from the one-act play to the employment of the full-length, more slowly developed form. This change is not necessarily a concomitant of the improved taste of the audience; it is caused by a combination of a lengthened span of attention in the interest of the spectators and a more rapidly accelerated increase in ability of the performers. There are, of course, difficulties in presenting effectively one-act plays, but the effect is dependent upon simpler elements:—the attention of the audience is not strained for so long a time; the plot is only slightly com-

Turandot. The torture scene. Hart House, Toronto. The frame of the fore-stage remained throughout, though covered at times by brilliant hangings.

Turandot. The Eunuchs' Dance. Hart House, Toronto. Directed by W. Sinclair. The picturesque and bizarre elements of this story have appealed to numerous producers. The plot will permit of almost any method of unusual treatment. Though directors like to use it for experimentation, the weakness of the theme is plainly shown by the fact that it has been put finally into an opera.

plicated; the characterization is done in rather broad strokes; the movement rises rapidly; there are fewer emotional waves in a complete one-act than in a single act of a full-length play. The inherent ambition of most acting groups would lead them to begin perhaps with the short form but to intersperse it as soon as possible with longer well-known significant plays, and then perhaps to pass from it almost entirely, returning only for an element of variety or perhaps when some master of dramaturgy publishes an unusual and unique one-act—a thing that is less likely to occur since persons who can write produceable plays would rather attempt the full-length for regular theaters than the one-act for colleges, amateur groups, and high schools.

The disappearance of the at one time inevitable names of authors from reports of seasons is one of the most interesting phenomena of the change that the non-commercial theater has undergone. In a recent list of eight acted short plays, only one name of the first rank reëchoes the glory of its past—*Her Tongue* by Henry Arthur Jones. The following three programs from widely separated parts of the United States date themselves unquestionably as belonging to 1925 or earlier. Every regular patron of drama has had a dozen opportunities to see every one of these popular vehicles. Some of the authors have faded into the paleness of reminiscent first thrills. Others have disappeared almost entirely from the knowledge of the younger generation in the audience. One, Lord Dunsany, has had rather sharp things said about his moods and

modes—the unfortunate price that every person whose rise is too rapid has to pay sooner or later unless his own development rises with his reputation. Yet here they are, these relentless reminders of things that are past. Lord Dunsany's *A Night at an Inn;* Floyd Dell's *Sweet and Twenty;* Gilbert Cannan's *Everybody's Husband;* Clare Kummer's *The Robbery;* Susan Glaspell's *Trifles;* Booth Tarkington's *The Trysting Place;* Alice Brown's *Joint Owners in Spain;* Walcros and Estoc's *Sabotage;* Zona Gale's *Neighbors;* Phillip Moeller's *Helena's Husband.*

In 1924–25 one university gave five full-length plays and thirty-five one-act plays. Two years later it had increased the number of full-length plays from five to eight, while the number of one-act plays remained virtually the same, thirty-eight.

A rapid examination of the titles of one-act plays produced rather generally throughout the country gives the impression that most of the significant ones now being acted were written several years ago by a rather small group of authors who mastered the form at the height of its popularity. Even the one play which began only recently to make its appearance on non-commercial programs was written many years ago for production in London by a professional company. It created a great deal of discussion at the time, discussion which, oddly enough, has not been repeated when it has passed into the repertories of acting groups. *Shall We Join the Ladies?* by Barrie would be even more suitable as little or art theater material if it did not have so large a cast—sixteen persons.

Chantecler by Edmond Rostand. Act IV. University of Montana. Directed by Alexander Dean. Scenery and costumes by Aleyn Burtis. The production was stylized and the scenery and costumes made no attempt to be literal or realistic, but by line, mass, color, and unnatural forms to give the impression of the objects and characters without picturing them actually, thereby emphasizing the universal idea of the fantasy.

The Forest by John Galsworthy. Goodman Theater, Chicago. Directed by Thomas Wood Stevens. Designed by Leslie Marzolf. Trees and dazzling sunlight. A few pieces of scenery before the plaster cyclorama.

It does, however, provide an interesting division of rôles, exactly half male, half female. Another advantage is that it requires no unusual setting—a drawback with some organizations of limited means and equipment who would like to do poetic, fantastic, and bizarre plays.

Photograph by Price

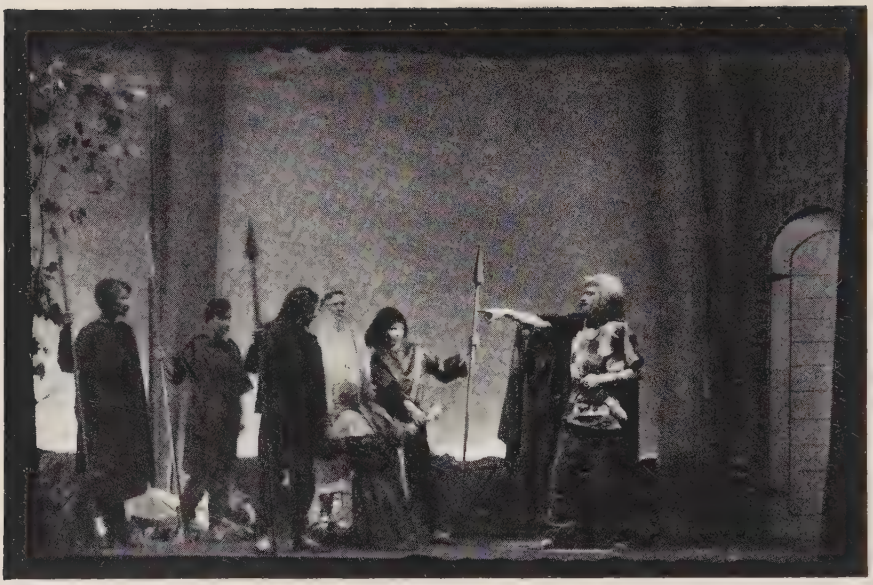
Birthday of the Infanta. New York Junior League

Another interesting thought aroused by comparative study of programs is a growing conviction that choices of plays are very much based upon geographical situation and range of publicity. Organizations in the United States can be very easily induced, apparently, to offer

what has been signally successful with some other group in the United States or to offer something that attracts because of the prestige of its author. When one crosses the line to Canada, however, one finds fewer offerings of what might be called the regulars in one-act titles in our own country. Between 1919 and 1924 the record of productions at Hart House, Toronto, seldom includes any play repeated almost *ad nauseam* on this side of the boundary. Among some sixty-three productions there are two by Dunsany, *The Queen's Enemies* and *A Night at an Inn*, and very likely that influence came from England rather than from the United States. There is one Barrie play, *Pantaloon;* one W. W. Jacobs, *The Monkey's Paw;* one Yeats, *At the Hawk's Well;* one Synge, *Riders to the Sea*—all of them evidently inspired by British prestige. In fact, there is only one entry by an author in the United States—*Gold* by Eugene O'Neill.

The same principle of prestige and publicity operates immediately and widely upon choices of plays that have made hits in New York. With the certainty that the New York run is to be so long that the play will not be sent on the road for many months, the requests for copies and permissions to perform begin to pour into producers' suites and publishers' offices. Often the permission is granted with the condition that it may be revoked if there arises the possibility of a stock or any other kind of performance in that vicinity; it is not an unheard of circumstance to have rehearsals interrupted by a telegram announcing that a professional company

Emperor Jones by Eugene O'Neill. University of Minnesota. Directed by Lester Raines. Jungle made from remnants of the year's left-over scenery dipped in green and brown paint. For each scene another batten load was let down.



Photograph by Eric Stahlberg

The House of Usna by Fiona Macleod. Smith College. Directed by S. A. Eliot, Jr. Acted behind a brown gauze, the stage showed much less visible detail than this illustration. The lighting was especially effective.

is going to visit the town; there must be no competition to it.

Virtually every acting group in the land, of whatever standing and ability, has done *Craig's Wife* well, indifferently, or badly; less often in the first manner than in the other two. The population has been shown the sinister effects of too much mistaken fervor in countless showings of *Hell Bent fer Heaven.* A few seasons ago, the inevitable entry was *Beyond the Horizon* or *Outward Bound,* yet all the possible audiences have not yet been subjected to them. So also *The Swan* has been carried into every section of the land; Louisville, New Orleans, Pasadena, Eugene (Oregon) have seen it, to mention only a few of the places.

As Oscar Wilde and James M. Barrie used to be, so G. B. Shaw is always in the theater; all of his compositions still remain effective from the early *Arms and the Man* and *Fanny's First Play* to *Heartbreak House* and *Saint Joan.* A. A. Milne and Frederick Lonsdale, rather little heard of just now in professional circles, are still as frequently offered, though in places further and further from the centers most alertly responsive to new interests.

The signal success of the quaint old *Fashion* in New York started a series of revivals of that play and others, the end of which is not yet. All of the early plays listed may not be traceable plainly to its example, but there has been a decided rise in the antiquarian tastes of patrons. The results: *The School for Scandal, The Contrast, Black Eyed Susan, Old Homestead, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Noah,*

The Critic, *Trelawney of the Wells*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and *Caste*.

The rapidity with which the name of a new dramatist is absorbed and his works familiarized is exemplified in the reception of Luigi Pirandello. Before the professional introduction of his *Six Characters in Search of an Author* to this country, his name was unknown. Now everyone has had the opportunity of seeing that play and two others: *Henry IV* and *Right You Are (If You Think So)*. A single instance of the same spread is evidenced in the delight that welcomes any mention of *The Mask and the Face* by Luigi Chiarelli. It would almost seem that the Italians have dispossessed the Russians.

A more encouraging sign of dramatic worth is the independence of the popular and commercial verdict. Only too frequently in the past five years there have been produced plays that should have succeeded; they needed some little determining factor to make them pay. If the non-commercial groups only followed the lead of the moneyed producing firms (as illustrated in the preceding paragraphs) there would be cause for apprehension. It is not correct to say that a play that must be withdrawn after only a short New York and road trial is caviare to the general and therefore will be good non-commercial material. A single instance will prove the truth of this statement. George Kelly's *Behold the Bridegroom* is good for neither kind of producing. But there have been instances of some quality that exactly fitted a drama for the local organizations throughout the country. Perhaps

Photograph by Albee-McBride Studio

What! Not the What-Not! A burlesque melodrama according to football rules. Cheering section on the right of stage; players' bench on the left. Referee in white. Vaudeville at University of Washington. Directed by Ruth Hecht.

Beautiful Sabine Women by Leonid Andreev. Act II. Neighborhood Playhouse. Designed by Frank Stout. No design or direction can be too bizarre for this Russo-Roman story.

the best examples of this are *March Hares* and *Children of the Moon.* Both were well or adequately acted, but for some reason, only a small number of theater-goers liked them. In their proper milieu—the little and community

Photograph by Price

Birthday of the Infanta. New York Junior League

theaters—they have never failed to please. In the same class may be placed *Expressing Willie; Belinda; Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary; The Romantic Young Lady; The Pigeon; The Silver Box; Beyond the Horizon; Ice Bound; The Detour; Hassan; Minick; Outward Bound; The Torch Bearers; Tweedles; You and I;* and *In a Garden.*

Quite justifiably the theatrical world often lauds itself upon the achievement of something noteworthy in daring or novelty or financial return:—the uniqueness of *Back to Methuselah*, the charm of a Gilbert and Sullivan succession, the click of *The Trial of Mary Dugan*, the final acceptance by the Theater Guild of plays by Eugene O'Neill, the long run of *Porgy*, and the testing of the company of Reinhardt. Less blatantly proclaimed from the columns of the press, yet just as significant for authors, directors, and audiences are the noteworthy achievements of the non-commercial producing groups.

The sensational success of *Chicago* focuses general attention upon the dramatic department of Yale for a time, yet as the script of that play was virtually finished when it was first submitted, and no student experimental performance was required, that phenomenon really means less for the general level of production than does the steady quiet training of experts in the arts of the theater who, leaving the university, turn their talents and skills to service in districts yearning for dramatic stimulation.

The record of memorable achievements of little theaters recently would fill a book. Four only can be listed here:—the opening of the Cleveland Play House with an astonishing production of Sem Benelli's *The Jest;* the Goodman Theater production of *The Vikings at Helgoland* to mark the Ibsen centenary; an all-negro production of Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom* at the Karamu Theater in Cleveland, so well patronized that it was repeated for a two weeks' run in a regular theater; the production—after

Fashion by Anna Cora Mowatt. Leland Stanford. Directed by Gordon Davis. Designed by Leslie Kiler. The height of the sentimentality, when heroine and imposter render that touching lyric, "Call me pet names, Dearest, call me a bird."

Photograph by Clifford Norton

White Wings by Phillip Barry. Act I. The Play House, Cleveland. Designed by Archie Lauterer. In later scenes the dated buildings in the rear were replaced by steel frames of skyscrapers. Thus the constructivists influenced one scene at least of this play. The intelligent quadruped was easily assembled. The authentic Victoria was almost beyond finding.

announcements and relinquishments by the professionals —of Eugene O'Neill's *Lazarus Laughed* by the Pasadena Community Playhouse.

In the May *Drama* a summary indicates that during the preceding season the most frequently represented authors were Shaw, with twenty-four productions; Barrie, ten; Ibsen, ten; Milne, nineteen; O'Neill, twelve; Galsworthy, eleven; Lonsdale, ten; and Shakespeare, twenty.

The great plays are not relegated to the limbo of forgotten things.

CHAPTER X

STUDYING DRAMA

MANY years ago in a course in drama that I was attending, a single play of Shakespeare's was discussed in class by the professor for six solid weeks! In that period of time—long enough for us to have memorized the lines, rehearsed, and acted the entire tragedy—what did the instructor find to talk about—for he, not the students, did all the talking. In spite of the fact that all the details of textual differences that any person should know had even then been collected by Horace Howard Furness and set down in his variorum edition, this instructor gravely informed us that the phrase "diseases of the world" is printed in the folio as "disasters of the world"; that the Elizabethan pronunciation of *revenue* differs from ours; that the expression "he hath writ this" is in the quartos "hath wrote"; that "strike flat" is in the quarto "smite flat," and more of the same sort. Virtually all of the information which I noted in my copy of the play I could have obtained from the variorum edition and an unabridged dictionary. Of the play as acted and actable drama there was nothing said.

In some of our educational institutions the study of Shakespeare as a philological display still continues as a required course; by that means holding the students who

would otherwise flock to the now elective courses in the study of plays as drama.

Professional dramatic critics have repeatedly called attention to the disparate showing of the drama courses

The Sunken Bell. Pasadena Community Playhouse

in universities and the acted productions offered by the student body for public patronage. All the professors of the department of English may be specialists in the history of the drama; the college catalog lists their courses:—

Shakespeare, non-Shakespearean Elizabethan drama; early liturgical drama; miracle and morality plays; successors of Shakespeare; restoration drama; the Celtic revival; yet the student performance upon which weeks of time and thousands of dollars are spent is an immature imitation of a glorified follies revue, in which the only approach to Elizabethan drama is that boys play the female rôles. And for years that contrast between scholarly instruction and student interest has continued in virtually all institutions of learning.

The first instructors who plead for chances to discuss recent and contemporary drama had rather difficult tasks in making their colleagues believe that they were not introducing a descent to vaudeville. The innovators took advantage of every weakness of the traditional pedagogues. Much of the Celtic revival was poetry; why, even Matthew Arnold had written an essay on Celtic literature (only the students snickered a little at linking an Englishman's essay of 1867 with the Abbey Theater, supported by a wealthy Englishwoman after 1900); and the plays of W. B. Yeats were so mythological and symbolic. Thus we were led to the dramatic attempts of George Moore, Douglas Hyde, Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, and J. M. Synge, enduring on the way some devastating experiences with plays attempted in the holy fanaticism of art and Ireland.

The direct results justified the means. It became known even to undergraduate students that there are great plays by Ibsen, disturbing plays by Tolstoy and

The White Peacock by Priscilla Flowers. Scenes 2 and 5. Yale. Setting by Harold Helvenston. Delicate artificiality shown by the conventionalized plants and the painted properties.

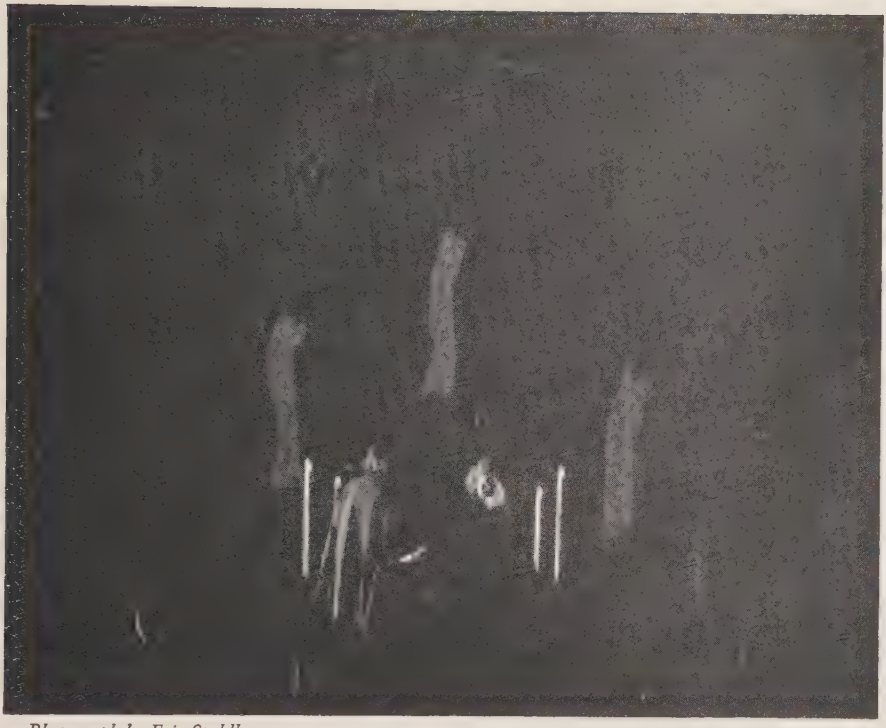
"A tall grey creature and the Idiot Queen." *Black Maskers* by Leonid Andreev. Produced for the first time in America at Smith College by S. A. Eliot, Jr.

Gorky, unsettling plays by Hauptmann and Sudermann, beautiful plays by Maeterlinck, passionate plays by D'Annunzio, delightful plays by Pinero and Jones, astonishing plays by Shaw. Courses in modern drama were tried and continued. The dramas of languages other than English forced themselves upon professorial attention. Often the courses in recent continental European dramas were offered first in the extension division, to the adults who pursue either education or culture until late in life. Often these modern plays were treated in the old-fashioned manner of analysis according to the rules of Aristotle, the Renaissance Italians, or Freytag; and there were minute analyses of motivating force, climax, ascending action, and peripeteia. Time was spent in careful consideration of Brunetière's theories of what constitutes real drama, but I doubt if any college professor of those days even asked a student to read Mr. William Gillette's essay on *The Illusion of the First Time in Acting.*

In those early days there was, however, one compensation; there were not many books dealing with modern dramatists, so the instructors could not assign much reading in biography (one of their favorite devices) or in criticism (any of it was in magazines and newspapers) or in history of the modern drama (it had been too busy entertaining to bother about making history). So there was time left for reading plays; and finally some inducement for going to a Saturday matinee to see Mrs. Patrick Campbell in *Pelleas et Melisande*, and Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Aiglon*, and although I could understand only a little

of it, Eleanora Duse in *Francesca da Rimini*, and the local German stock company in *The Sunken Bell*. It was a comforting corroboration of my youthful enthusiasm to have the instructor remark after he had seen the performance that *Pelleas et Melisande* was supremely beautiful. For the greater part, twenty-five years ago, all this study of modern and contemporary drama was purely and merely literary. Student acting ability still found its only outlet in the musical comedies (hip and hoof shows the professional jargon now terms them) which are as good fun as always, yet which are today not the only dramatic products of our great universities.

Closely coupled with the reading of plays (a public taste that has increased so steadily that in this year there is the unprecedented instance of the sale of a play, *Strange Interlude*, that equals the sale of any other best seller) has been the publishing of plays. The old belief that the printing of a play reduced its possible audience seems to have exploded. The practice now is to hurry into a book virtually every success and failure of the New York season. The money-making *The Trial of Mary Dugan* is made available for every reader long before the New York run is finished; the pale *Love in a Mist* languishes for a few weeks on the road before fading into the storehouse and immediately the printed version makes productions possible wherever a director cares to risk this sentimental comedy. Publication before performance—as with the plays of Eugene O'Neill, of G. B. Shaw, and of Pirandello—seems to have no detrimental effect upon the pa-



Photograph by Eric Stahlberg

Black Maskers by Leonid Andreev. Scene 4. Smith College. Directed by S. A. Eliot, Jr. Francesca bids the dead Lorenzo farewell, while the living invisible Lorenzo turns his back. The lighting was furnished by four candles, a spotlight from the right tormentor, and a faint striplight behind the gauze with appliquéd figures at the rear.

The Post Office by Rabindranath Tagore. Designed by Richard Rychtarik. As the poet asks for a set that shows both exterior and interior, the artist has made a house that may be swung round disclosing its rooms. Broken spotlights on the roof represent sunlight filtering through foliage.

tronage. There are thousands of persons who *prefer* to read plays before attending performances.

For a large part of this awakened responsiveness of the reading public to plays our educational institutions are directly responsible.

Thousands of persons (one is disposed to term them the traditionally-minded) assert over and over again that they do not care to see any Shakespearean plays on the

The Gateway. Central High School, Cleveland

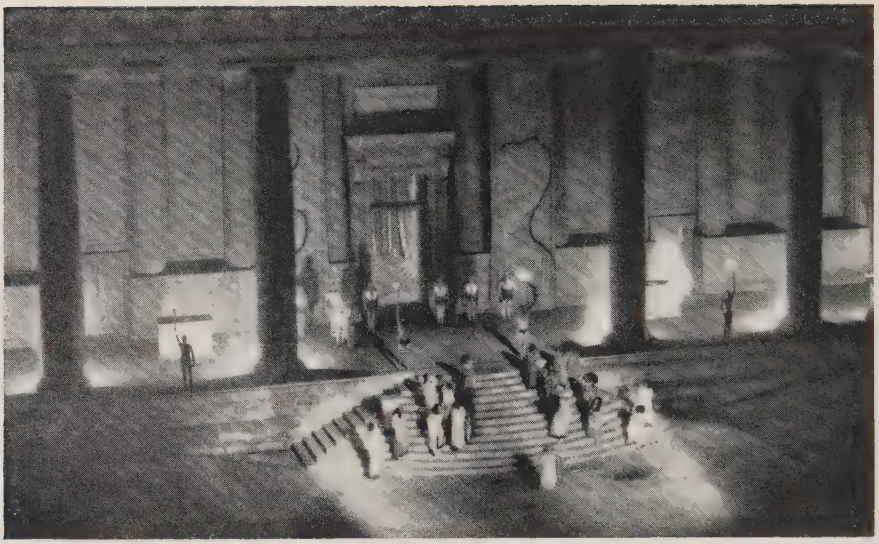
stage. Their reason is always the same:—they can imagine better performances than any living actors and actresses can give. Many of these "set" thinkers admit that early in life they saw either a great performance which they are certain can not be equalled by any youngster now, or a wretched performance which cured them of any curiosity about masterpieces in the modern theater. Let these opinionated heirs to the past once become captivated by *methods of production* and they will find in

theater-going a delight that attention to the text only could never furnish.

With all allowances made for differences of opinion concerning inclusions, there is a consensus of agreement upon the dramatic masterpieces of the past. Their number is not likely to increase; it may even grow less as more and more of them have to survive the test of audience appraisal in the theater, not the sentimental reader appreciation in the library. If persons read or saw *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Gay Lord Quex*, and *The City*, they must inevitably have perceived that there is much more to real drama than literary expression. Recognition by colleges of elements of playwriting was bound to follow. The least observant was likely to reflect upon the adroitness of the last five minutes of Act I in Wilde's play; to recall the skilful avoidance of a *cul de sac* in Act II of Pinero's comedy; to think seriously upon the theme of Clyde Fitch's unpleasant tragedy. Such topics, introduced into college study, began to shift emphasis from mere writing to dramatic planning.

Even in the study of the "classics" questions arose that puzzled the closest critics. How should Lady Macbeth utter those baleful words, "We fail"? How had famous actresses delivered them? Never once in my college days did I hear of the quarrel in the famous family of actors over that speech. There was little or no information on whether Banquo's ghost should be present only in Macbeth's mind or really an actor seated in the chair. Modern authors explain explicitly what they want their

Moontide by Colin Campbell Clements. Theodora Irvine Players, New York. A remarkably impressive scene because of the concentrated lighting.



Trojan Women by Euripides. University of California. Directed by C. D. von Neumayer. Six thousand spectators witnessed the two performances. Greek conditions of the immense audience are approximated in this spacious structure. Light and shadow emphasize emotions in a decorative manner.

characters to do and how they are to speak, when they are to move and when to stand still; some authors, in the opinions of producers, are too explicit in their directions. The simple device of indicating emphasis by printing the letters of words with wider spaces attracts attention likewise to the delivery and acting aspects of the play. No enthusiastic class is going to be content with seeing and talking about these aspects; there must be, for the adequate knowledge of a play, some kind of production, though it mean no more than reading by cast.

If I remember correctly, George P. Baker has stated that detailed study of minor and forgotten plays of the seventeenth and eighteenth century led him to analysis and synthesis of plot. He inaugurated and has developed the most famous and practical courses in play composition in the country. He is not, however, nor has he ever been content with that kind of composition that stops with putting words on paper. Plays—at least plays under his direction—are not composed in that manner. Many of the photographs generously supplied for inclusion in this volume bear witness to the production and revision method employed so successfully at Yale. Some are marked, "Produced in the experimental theater." Such entries as the following are usual: "Produced for private audience, December; rewritten for performance in February; presented publicly a week later."

The production of plays then became a necessity of any department pretending to study the living drama. But production will not evolve itself; a group can not say

enthusiastically "Let's give a play," and then sit with hands folded until the performance materializes. Too often drama readers and workers have dissociated all idea of the words of a play from the material of actual production. It is all very well to speak of plays produced in space, to grow eloquent in support of or opposition to classics in modern dress, to repeat that a simple platform and a passion will make a performance; in reality these things will not suffice always, nor for all plays. Regret it or accept it, persons vitally interested in plays must become acquainted with carpentry, woodwork, canvas, painting, flame-proofing, draughting, designing, electricity, colored bulbs, alternating and direct current, floods, baby spots, gelatine mediums, switchboards, dimmers, costume sewing, make-up, wigs, draperies, practicable doors and windows, grids, rigging, counterweights, cut-outs, leg-drops, painting frames, "cycs," tormentors, teasers, plugs, and a thousand and one other entities that go to making a good stage performance.

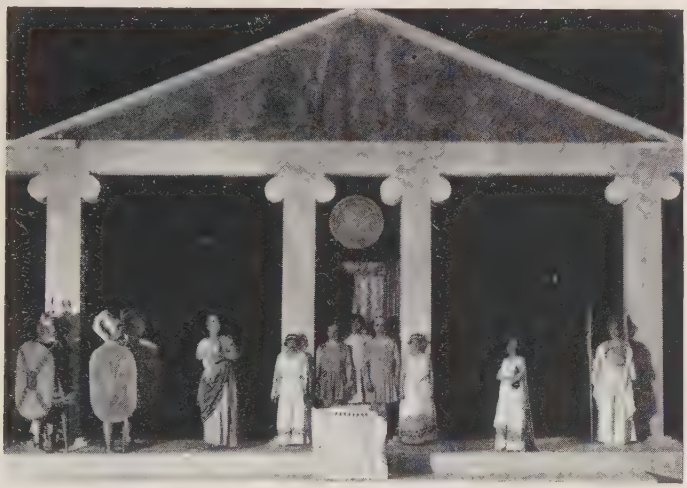
Those of us who are accustomed to the advantages of metropolitan centers can hardly comprehend the situation in small settlements of intellectual people. One college folder sums up the condition baldly in a few poignant sentences. This town "as an isolated community never had an opportunity to see good plays and famous actors. Famous actors never come here, but good plays can be secured and with an organization to present them, famous actors are not missed. Amateur acting in years gone by has been a joke, endured only for the sake of loyalty to a

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. Pennsylvania State College. Directed by Arthur C. Cloetingh. Designed by Clyde H. Minster. To the appeal of the story in an old Greek play there must be added for modern audiences some elements of statuesque beauty. Freedom of treatment is essential.

Medea by Euripides. Pennsylvania State College. Scenery by Clyde H. Minster. Directed by Arthur C. Cloetingh. What old Greek drama lacks in intimate appeal, it replaces by opportunity for grace, movement, and rhythm. Simplicity of setting must be relieved by sweep of evolution and statuesqueness of pose.

club or college, but now amateur acting has taken on a new meaning. Intelligent, conscientious coaching, artistic scenery, a will to accomplish, and there is produced a result which brings credit to the players and a reputation to the college."

In five years at this comparatively small institution there were produced eighty-seven one-act and twenty-five full-length plays. If knowledge of music can be fos-



Iphigenia. Kirksville Teachers College, Missouri

tered by attendance at concerts, should not knowledge of drama be fostered by attendance at plays? Every minutest phase of theatrical art may be studied and practiced intensively in virtually every representative educational institution in the United States.

Only one requisite of production facility seems to have lagged in realization. Instructors have been discovered or trained or they have sprung up spontaneously; stu-

dents have flocked to the courses; experts in the required accompaniments of designing and lighting have been drafted from the art and physics departments. Everything has been supplied or obtained except one—the adequately equipped place in which to produce plays.

Time was when the first or most visible mark of a college campus was the distinctive building of the chapel. For decades donors have had chapels raised and organs installed and stained glass windows inscribed. Yet these philanthropists—thrifty in all other respects, and these faculties—pleading for more class space, pointed with pride to these masses of emptiness, these spacious halls seldom used on any week day longer than the thirty minutes for chapel exercises, and a few times during the term for lectures. Yet a building designed for religious services is almost totally unsuited for any other purpose. Even commencement exercises within its stern walls freeze into hardened formality; the most brilliant sallies of a noted wit are received with the politest snickers because of the sacred connotation of the space. Instead of chapels (the Harvard graduates have recently discussed the fitness of another such structure on their campus), philanthropic donors should consult progressive architects and give to colleges and universities buildings that may be used for the hundred miscellaneous purposes that arise in academic activities. Lectures can be as well delivered from a theater stage as anywhere else; graduation exercises, concerts, and even religious services can be appropriately

Hippolytus by Euripides. Bennett School, Millbrook, New York. Directed by Charles Rann Kennedy.

Photograph by Earle S. O'Day

Lazarus Laughed by Eugene O'Neill. Pasadena Community Playhouse. Directed by Gilmor Brown. Designed by James Hyde. The first production of this drama with its masks of various sizes. A remarkable achievement in both play and production.

attended there. And most continuously, plays can be rehearsed and produced there.

There is great cause for rejoicing that many colleges now have such structures; buildings that are used—not thirty minutes on week days only —but profitably occupied for fifteen hours six days a week. The records of college play production are filled with the plaints of those devoted directors who year after year staged dramatic masterpieces on narrow shelves, forcing a stubborn equipment to work wonders in illusion and lighting; devising, with Herculean labor, changes of scenery to astound captious undergraduates.

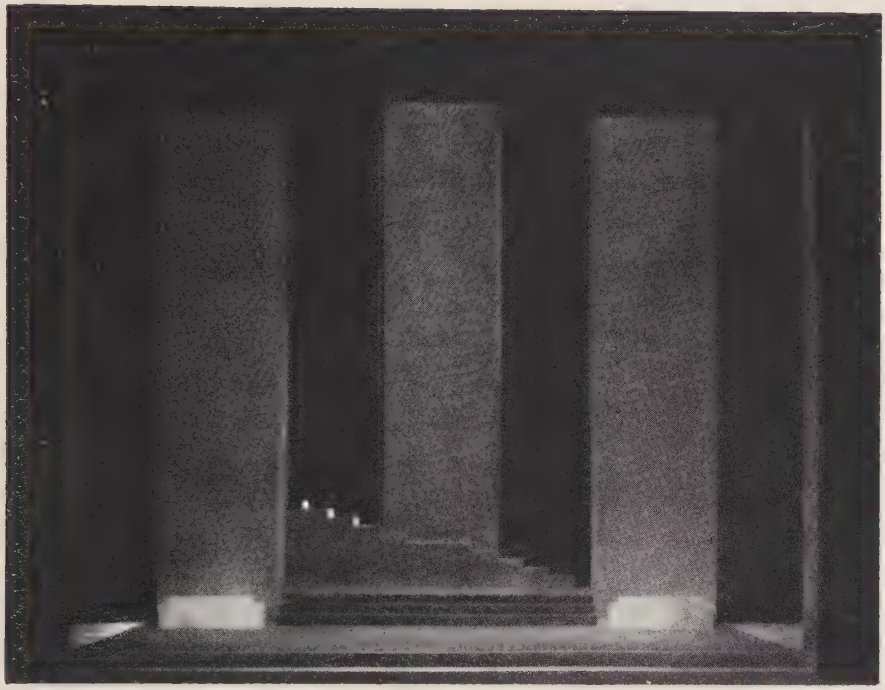
The difference between what was at Harvard for dramatics and what now is at Yale is too well known to be retold here. Look at the illustrations in this volume of the facilities at Bennett School (pages 47 and 271), at the University of North Carolina (pages 5 and 6); at Cornell (page 9); and Carroll College (page 14).

As the facilities are increased there will doubtless be a few distinctive phases of dramatic skill for which educational institutions will become renowned.

The first will likely be the performance of more and more plays of the past, plays of which everyone has heard, yet plays that later generations seldom see revived. Already the list of such renewals of past prestige is a long one. It includes *The Contrast* by Royall Tyler, produced first in New York in 1787, recently displayed at Brattleboro, Vermont; by Plays and Players, Philadelphia; by the Boston Drama League; by the University of Oregon;

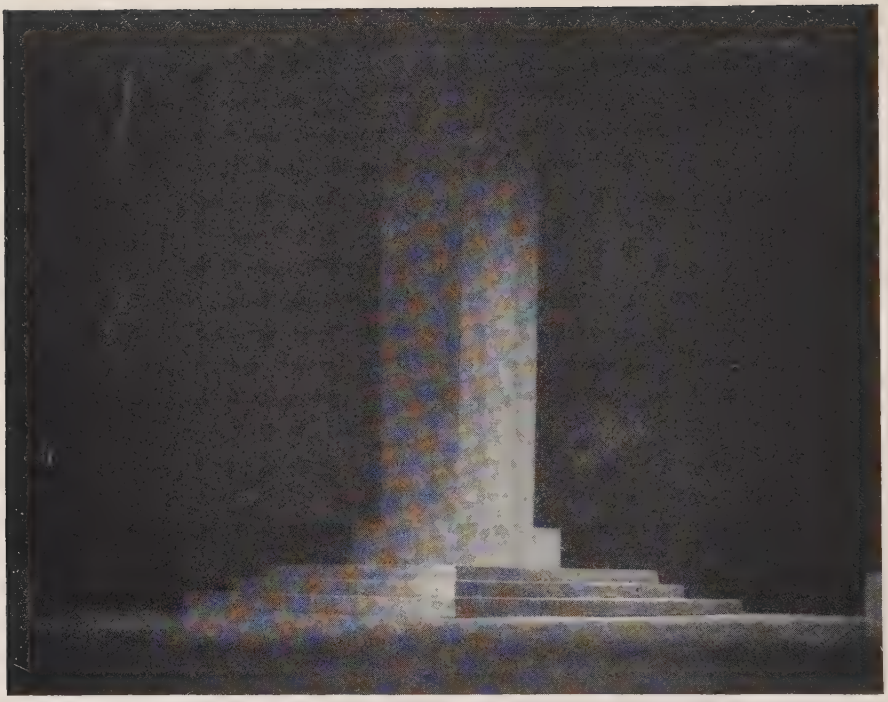
by Cornell. Everyone who reads the annals of the early American stage knows the name of William Dunlap. Columbia presented in 1928 his comedy of 1789, *The Father of an Only Child.* The University of Washington produced John Howard Payne's drama, *Clari, or the Maid of Milan,* with its one undying feature—the singing of *Home, Sweet Home* in the first act. (See page 93.) Only in an educational institution could one see *Love in Livery* by Marivaux. It is reasonable to expect that plays like *Œdipus Rex, Medea, Brand, Les Femmes Savantes,* and *The Critic* will be offered more frequently in campus playhouses than in commercial ones though the significance of professional success with *The Rivals, She Stoops to Conquer, The Beaux' Stratagem, Henry V, Merry Wives of Windsor, Taming of the Shrew, Diplomacy,* and *Volpone* (though by means of a German revision) should not be overlooked.

The college may, in the second place, induce a typically academic mode of writing for its own student audiences—a kind of satire or parody to replace or supplement the present "university show." There have been slight indications of a novel treatment in isolated instances. Several years ago a few of the spring shows of the University of Pennsylvania Mask and Wig Club promised it. One illustration in this book displays another that must have been hilarious entertainment. (See page 245.) The title itself is in the best low comedy tradition: *What! Not the What-Not?* Such an attitude of delightful spoofing may produce a play as characteristic of its environment as was *The*



Photograph by Julia B. Sanker

Macbeth. The Play House, Cleveland. Designed and directed by Frederic McConnell. An architectural setting in which only the lighting changed during the rapidly succeeding scenes of the play. Only the scenes with the witches and the moving woods of Birnam presented difficulties for the audiences.



Photograph by Clifford Norton

King Lear. The Play House, Cleveland. Designed and directed by Frederic McConnell. Realism replaced by stylization. On such a stage an Elizabethan drama can be played without waits or cuts. Attention is focused on the acting and delivery of the lines.

Yellow Jacket by Hazelton and Benrimo, or *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* by Beaumont and Fletcher, or *The Torch Bearers* by George Kelly.

In the third place, colleges may experiment more boldly and frequently than other non-commercial organizations.

Photograph by Wayne Albee, McBride Studio
A Mask. University of Washington

The reasons for this to me are self-evident: there need be no dependence on receipts; plays do not have to run to any specified number of performances; audience appreciation and applause are not the measure of the experiment's value; valuable lessons in what not to do and what not to attempt would be learned and reported to others.

As is natural and wise, not all colleges dare experiment to the same degree. An experiment with untested chemicals though it may be spectacular may blow the laboratory to smithereens and there are no more opportunities for the simplest, safest experiments. I have heard of directors of dramatics who in the teeth of expressed and determined opposition experimented neither wisely nor well and who at the present time are doing no producing for any educational institution.

The delightful experiment at Vassar, using three modes for the same one-act is illustrated in this volume. (See page 181.) So also is the similar experiment with Shakespearean material at Smith. (See page 185.) S. A. Eliot, Jr., has been unusually versatile in choice and treatment. He has given first American productions of *False Gods* by Brieux and of *Black Maskers* by Andreev. (See page 259.) He displays the naïveté of the early religious drama in *Noah* (page 68).

From academic circles will come (or not, as destiny decrees) the triumphs of the Edward Sheldons, the Eugene O'Neills, the Paul Greens to feed the professional theater. College effort must train more than the few masters of play writing. It is no less to their lasting credit that, in addition to the working producers, the designing scenewrights, the lighting experts they send out, they are continuously training thousands of young men and women to be better patrons of the theater and raising the general level of taste for things dramatic.

Photograph by Paul A. Hesse

The Great God Brown by Eugene O'Neill. The original New York production. The writing and performance of this play mark an epoch in the history of the drama in this country.

Photograph by Clifford Norton

The Great God Brown. The Play House, Cleveland. Designed and directed by K. Elmo Lowe. A multiple setting, in which lighting on three levels concentrated attention. Upper platform, the Casino Pier; middle, the office; lower, Brown's library, Cybel's room. The beauty and adaptability of this setting illustrate clearly why audiences are becoming more and more critical of commercial productions.

CHAPTER XI

NOVELTY

The statement has already been made frequently in this volume that the life of the non-commercial theater depends on its experimentation, on its release from tradition, on its advances in theatric arts, on its forward-turned vision, on its many-sidedness, on its willingness to discard, and on its avidness for the unusual. If you have attended successive performances by a stock company you must have been able after a few weeks to trace a monotonous level of control through all the various different kinds of plays, if there were that much variety. Often a repertory or stock company learns that it does one kind of play better than any other; therefore it sticks to that safe and sure kind of choice over a long season. The stock company is doing well if in a season devoted to modern farce and mystery plays one good ranting melodrama finds a place.

A self-respecting little theater is embarrassed if it does three plays of the same nature in a season. It likes to flit about from Russian symbolism to Shakespeare, to American realism of the farm, to a French miracle, to a sophisticated New York satire, to an English thesis drama, to a minor Elizabethan, to contemporary farce. These diversified kinds of plays were shown during the season of

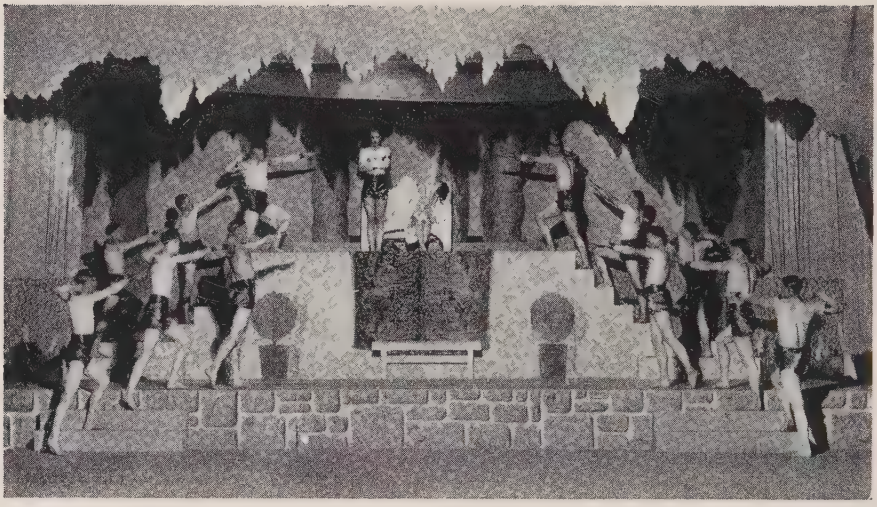
1927–28 by Carnegie Institute. The decided novelties of the period were *The Life of Man* by Leonid Andreev, *Measure for Measure*, *The Elder Brother* by John Fletcher, *The Madras House* by Granville Barker, and *The Tidings Brought to Mary* by Paul Claudel.

A still wider range is covered by the season at the Cleveland Play House. In time it stretches from early Greek in the *Hippolytus* to the up-to-the-minute in *On Approval.* In form it offers the well-made play in *Our Betters* and the expressionist experiment of *The Adding Machine.* In costume pieces there are *The School for Scandal* and *Cæsar and Cleopatra.* Italy, Austria, and Holland are represented by *Right You Are (If You Think So)*, *The Green Cockatoo*, and *The Good Hope.* The other plays included were *White Wings*, *Fashion*, *The Skin Game*, *Arms and the Man*, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, *The Great God Brown*, *Trelawney of the Wells*, *Everyman*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear.*

The mention of a modern version of a French medieval miracle theme suggests the richness of the great body of medieval dramatic literature. Perhaps collegiate audiences will be most likely *a priori* to be interested in specimens of this kind of early drama, yet it may be easy to impress general patrons. In one city *Doctor Faustus*, given with all the resources of illusory scenery and lighting possible on the modern stage, has been done not once but several times. Too many repetitions would mar the novelty, but Smith College has offered *Noah;* Pasadena, *Abraham and Isaac* and *The Nativity;* Cornell, *The Shep-*

Photograph by Photo Products

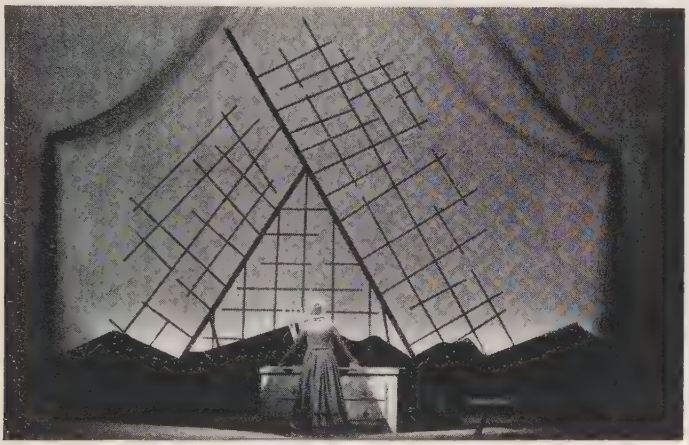
Redemption by Lyof N. Tolstoy. Y. M. and W. H. A., Pittsburgh. Designed by Frank Stout. Once made famous by the acting of John Barrymore.



Yalami, musical comedy by Ruth E. Wilson and Homer Huntoon. Iowa State College. Directed by Lester Raines. Dances by Jessie Shannon. This stirring warriors' dance on the four-level stage was the climax to the third act.

herds' Play, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, and *The Offering of the Shepherds*.

Contemporaneousness has always been the vaunt of the commercial theater, though at times its complacency has been rudely overset by the success of some play revived from the almost forgotten past. The most successful plays on the war were written and staged long after the armistice. *Candida*, set and dressed correctly for its period,



Brand. Act III. Yale

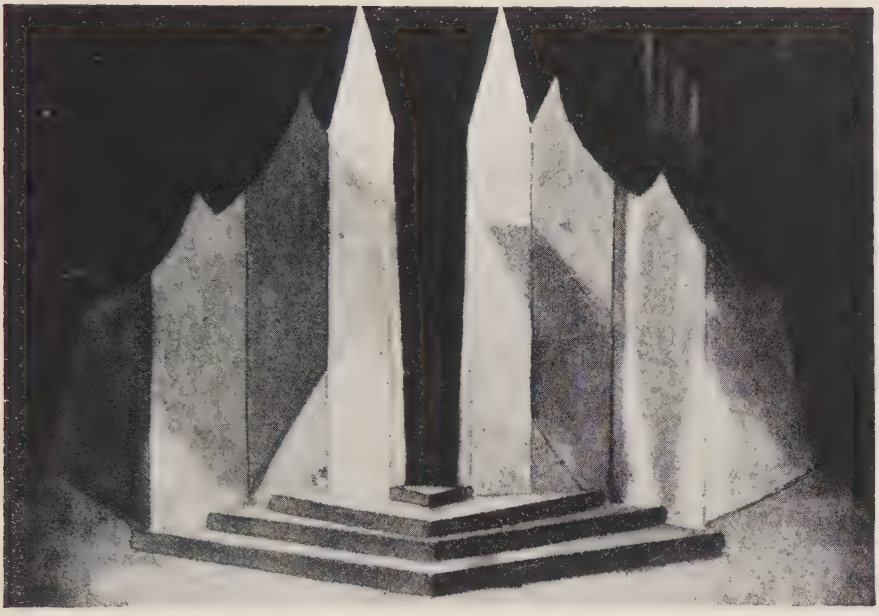
ran for a long time in New York. So also did *What Every Woman Knows*. Professional actors have in the past three seasons turned more and more hopefully to the favorites of by-gone decades:—to *The Rivals*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Diplomacy*, *Trelawney of the Wells*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. In the independent theaters some of the most recent reminders of the days that are past have been *Fashion; Old Homestead; Uncle Tom's Cabin;* the historically important but seldom performed *Madras House;* Robertson's often

cited comedy offered only once in my time, *Caste;* Sheridan's *The Critic;* the quaint and illuminating *Beggar's Opera*, originally produced in 1728; Sheridan's *The Duenna;* and because of the centenary, many of Ibsen's plays including *Brand* and *The Vikings at Helgoland.*

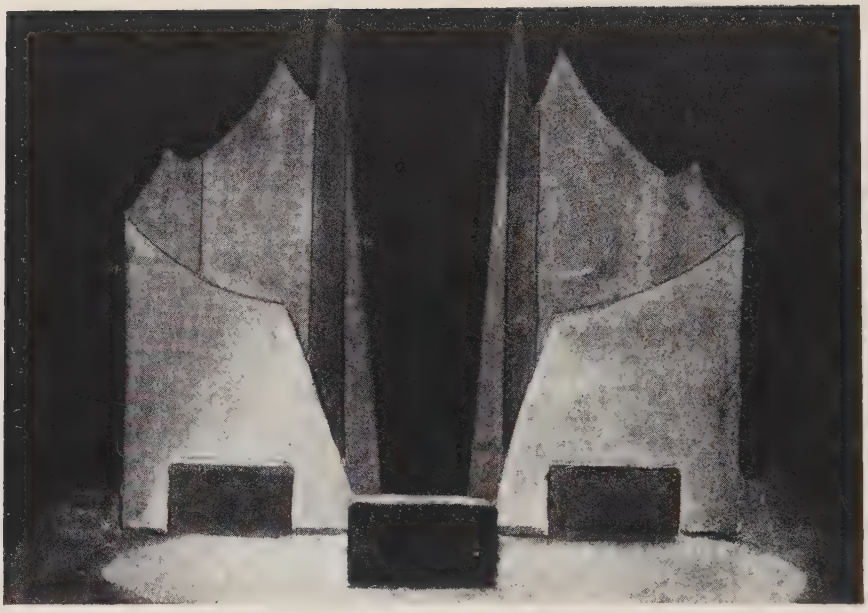
The great danger about trying to be novel in the theater is that a few repetitions destroy the sense of novelty. The first production of a Shakespearean play in modern costume by a British company caused only the slightest ripple of comment in this country, probably because so few persons know *Cymbeline* either in the book or on the stage that they had no conventions or sensibilities to be startled. With *Hamlet*, however, there was a furore of feeling. In rapid succession costumers' expenses have been saved by professional producers and independent groups for *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, and for the eighteenth century novelty, *The Critic.*

Every once in a long while a Shakespearean novelty will appear on the records of production. Some of the most recent ones are *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest.*

Puppetry has always a fascination for some workers in the theater. The simulation by real actors of the awkwardness and stiffness of puppets seems fitting—if the trick is to be tried at all—in the mechanical doll and toy soldier stunts of vaudeville and revue. The Theater



Goat Song by Franz Werfel. The Play House, Cleveland. Designed by Archie Lauterer. Platforms and simply hinged panels—almost screens, for the five acts.



Goat Song by Franz Werfel. The Play House, Cleveland. These variously arranged panels adequately set the diverse scenes of this five-act play:—exteriors, cottage interior, a cathedral.

Guild did one of its earliest plays at the Garrick Theater, Benevente's *Bonds of Interest*, as though it were a puppet play. The effect was not convincing. At Smith College, an original composition by Eleanor Golden was produced in this same manner.

The desire of playwrights and producers to transform actors into what they are not and the revival of the study of the early modes of presentation have led to widespread experimentation with masks. Masks have been peculiarly effective in dance numbers. In regular drama they have not yet been entirely satisfying either to actor or to spectator. Rather strangely they seem not to have been employed where they most consistently belong—in Greek tragedy—though many Greek tragedies (*Œdipus*, *Medea*, *Trojan Women*, and *Hippolytus*) have been presented in both covered and open-air theaters.

Masks in *The Great God Brown* seem not to have aided the performance; there remained always in the mind of the spectator a maladjustment between the reality of the person playing the rôle and the artificiality of the false face. In the Vassar production of *A Marriage Proposal* the critic's report was that the least effective of the methods was the expressionistic one in which the actors wore masks. For such a strange drama as Andreev's *Black Maskers* the face coverings may be appropriate. The most elaborate demand yet made for their use is in *Lazarus Laughed*, for Mr. O'Neill stipulates type masks for several persons; some "all men, have identical masks of double size"; "the Chorus wears masks double the life

size of the Crowd masks;" "Caligula wears a half-mask of crimson, dark with a purplish tinge, that covers the upper part of his face to below the nose."

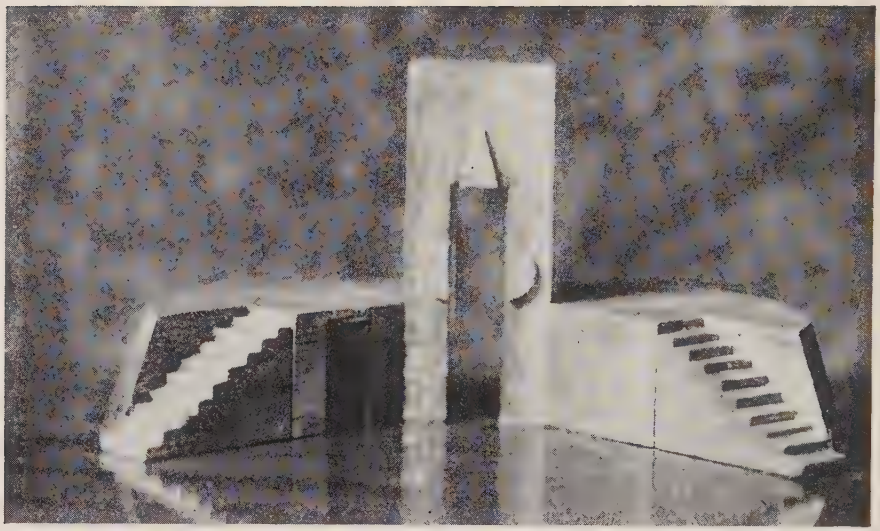
The artist and artisan, to say nothing of the historical, instinct induce experimentation with masks. Perhaps the explanation of their disturbing influence upon spectators is akin to the old direction of actors to authors, "Never write for a character to speak anything he can show to

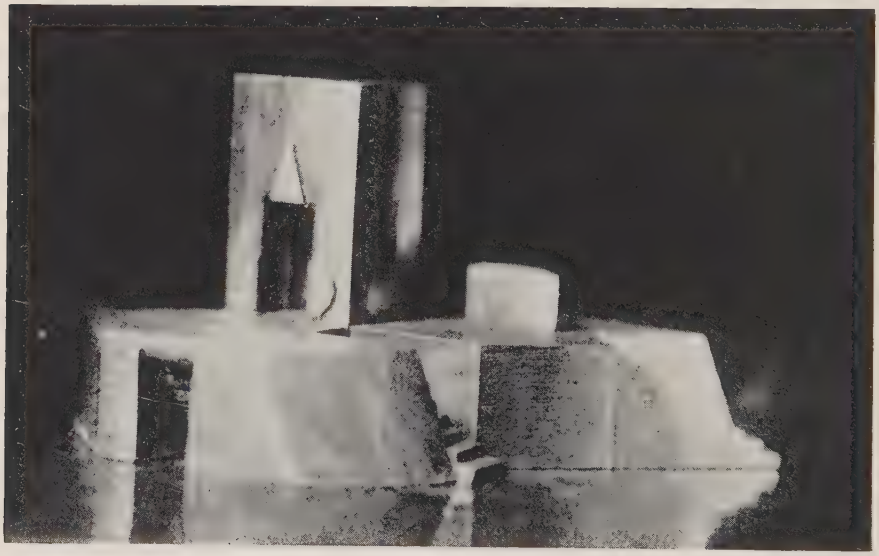
Brand. Act II, Scene 1. Yale

the audience by acting." It is very likely true that actors would rather be allowed to depict by mobility or fixity of their own countenances the ruling traits of their dispositions. In any development the device may undergo, the use of false faces is another striking illustration of the so-called advance of theatric art by a return to a primitive mode.

What, if anything permanent or general, will come from constructivism remains to be seen. In this country, at

Brand. Yale. Directed by George P. Baker and Alexander Dean. Designed by Donald Mitchell Oenslager. One of the most notable productions of the Ibsen Centenary. III. "A little garden by the Parsonage." II. "By the fiord-side; steep precipices all around. The ancient and tumble-down church."





Permutations and combinations. Model by Richard Rychtarik of a three-piece set for non-realistic dramas. Steps, curves, platforms, archways in space. No proscenium, no curtain. Entrance openings in stage floor.

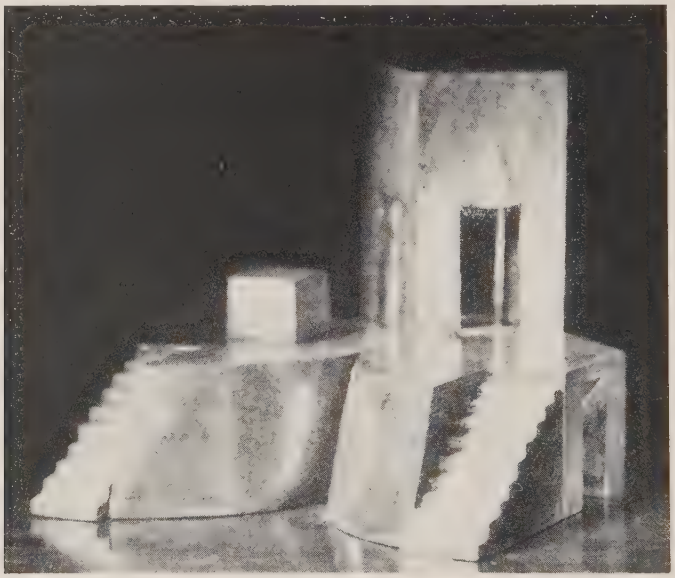
least, little of any significance has resulted from the interesting experiments. The plays written for constructivist treatment have had their little day and disappeared. Plays conceived in an age innocent and unsuspecting have been set and acted in its patterns and have appeared to spectators as freaks or roaring farces. Doubtless western society is at a disadvantage in trying to judge constructivism. Only in Russia where the old order has been swept aside (not modified), where power and desire have inflamed the toilers, where work and art are being subjected to a marriage, companionate or unending, is there in the minds and hearts of the audiences that initial acceptance which makes possible all the implications of the constructivist convention; for convention it is, as well-defined as the convention of Greek tragedy or the moving picture.

The Director of the Theater of the Revolution at Moscow, Vsevolod Meierhold, explains the underlying principle of the method quite succinctly.

"The theater is dying because the audience is being forgotten. Actors must cease to be characters, as in realism, or abstractions, as in expressionism. They must remain actors, using the play as a ball to be tossed now to each other, now to the audience. The stage must no longer be a painted fake, but merely a space for actors, so constructed with elements of reality that they can best create the spirit of play, work, or love as the case may be."

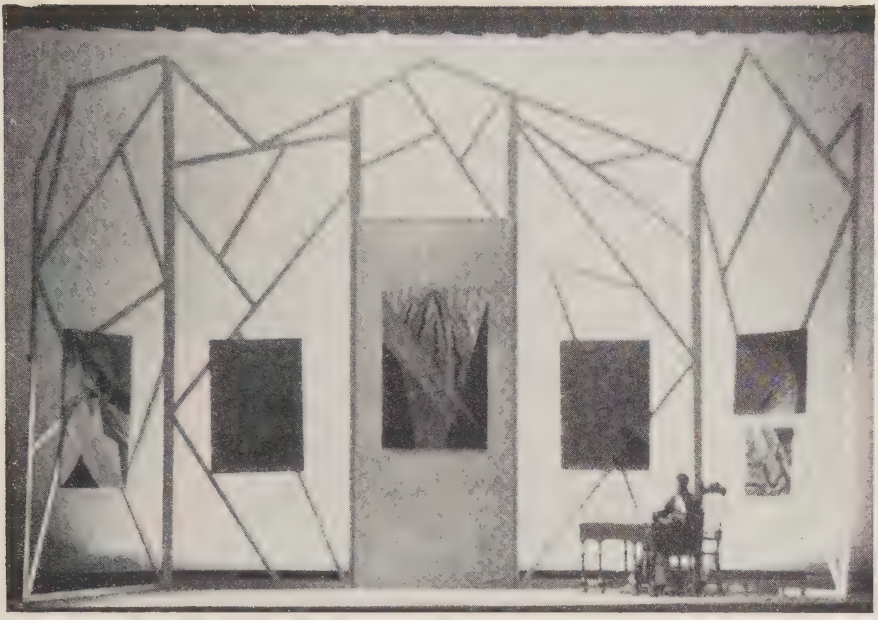
Here again, as so often in the statements of writers on the theater, is the attempt to weld audience and perform-

ers into one body, in contradiction of the theory of the fourth wall, the keyhole, the slice of life, the reality of stage action. Something has already been said of this attempt and of its more usual devices—forestage, steps, direct speeches, characters planted among the spectators, costuming the ushers, and entrances and exits through



Model by Richard Rychtarik

the house. Another device may be mentioned—transforming the auditorium by architectural changes or decorations to make one with the stage setting. Thus, for a play with an Egyptian story and setting, the entire auditorium is transformed into an Egyptian hall. In such an instance, of course, lights in the house should be kept on during the performance, otherwise the effect of the deco-



The Doctor's Dilemma by G. B. Shaw. Pasadena Community Playhouse. Expressionist setting by James Hyde. If the acting and the lighting are right, may the setting be anything the designer pleases?

Cake by Witter Bynner. Pasadena Community Playhouse. Constructivist setting by Margaret Linley. Nothing that comes from Moscow could better illustrate this most advanced method of setting a play.

ration will be exercised for only a short time. The device is a costly one. Some investigator should test its effect by doing the play with and without the auditorium reenforcement.

How far should the appropriateness of spectators to the play be carried? For a rural drama should we be forced to don overalls and aprons before we are shown to our seats? The essence of the whole matter lies, it seems to me, in the fusing of auditorium and stage by the projection of emotional sympathy, not by the employment of crude and apparent materialized devices.

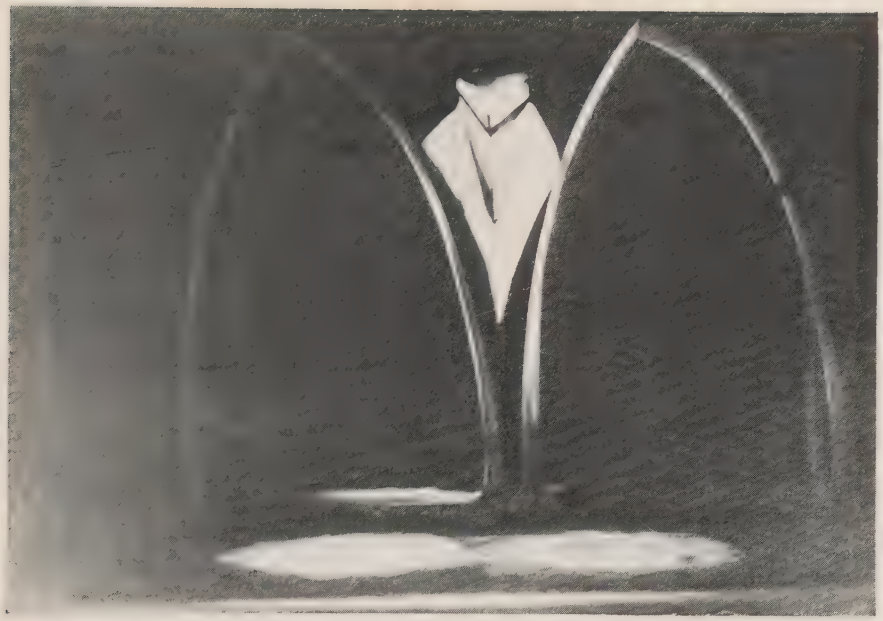
The two camps of realism and non-realism will always divide the dramatic world, but it is slightly startling to meet a bold defiance to the accepted world of fantasy and fairy for children's entertainments. What of the age-old traditional pantomimes of the British Christmas season? What of the Barrie and Maeterlinck realms? I have always suspected that adults are more fanciful than children and even adults have been bored by attempts to recapture the daintiness of the fantastic and exhibit it on the boards. The Heckscher Children's Theater in New York is described as the "most beautiful children's theater in the world;" its walls are decorated with paintings by Willy Pogany of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Flying Trunk*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *The Princess and the Swineherd*. Its director, Ashley Miller, announced in January, 1928, that the policy would be "to relegate to the past the slow, mechanical, respectable but extremely tiresome round of fairy plays, fantasies, and

other uninspiring shows that have been offered our youth in the name of amusement." Mr. Miller supports his beliefs with the "crisp, lively, human presentations of *Love Laughs at the Pirate* (which ran for nine weeks in this house)" and *Mr. Scrooge* which ran for five Saturday afternoons. Programs were to be called Dramaticales, and were designed to give the impression of a juvenile Chauve Souris. There were to be "short, crisp little playlets and numbers, in which comedy will predomi-

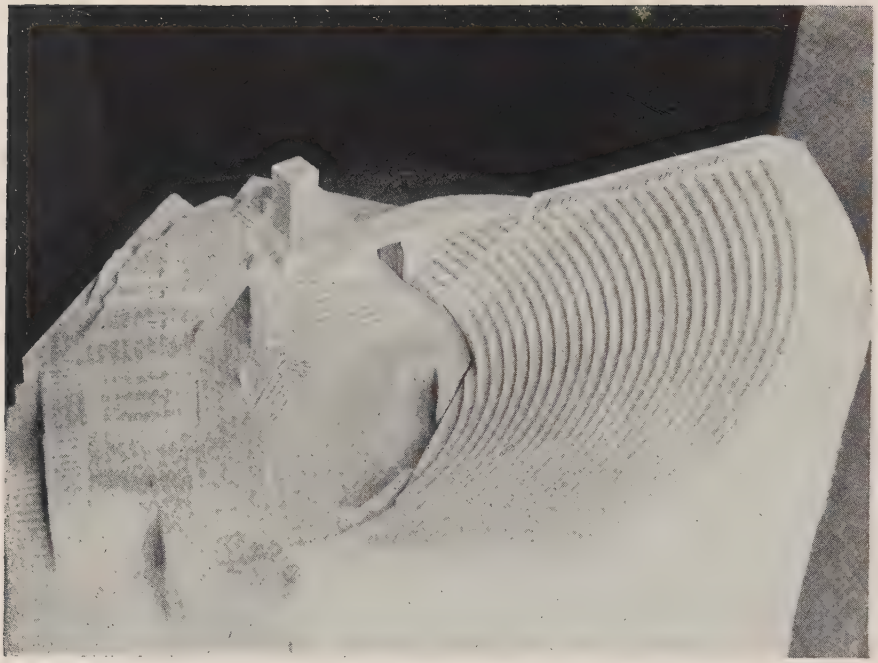
Phedre. Cincinnati Art Theater

nate . . . dance as a simple form of emotional expression . . . the lay of the minstrel or character song . . . the pantomime or silent drama . . . samples of high comedy, farce, melodrama, and music play . . . and Shakespeare."

Though repetition would reduce the novelty, it would be an excellent thing for class consciousness if every non-commercial group in the land could be subjected every two years to a performance of George Kelly's *The Torch Bearers.* The lesson will always be salutary; the novelty will diminish. Back stage scenes in plays are not en-



The Fall of the House of Usher. Scene 2. Adaptation in seven scenes by F. L. Day. Yale. Designed by Donald Mitchell Oenslager. Two arches in space make an impression as unusual as that of Poe's tale.



Open air theater with architectural stage. Model by Richard Rychtarik, exhibited at the Cleveland Art Museum.

tirely new with this generation. The vogue of *Trelawney of the Wells* in the 1890's was traceable to this unusual setting.

Novelties, or rather unusual and convenient devices, are introduced into every art theater that is built. References to several of them are scattered through these pages. Many of them are eminently successful in saving time and effort; others served their short day, or became more cumbersome in use than simpler old-fashioned methods. The standard instance of this is the revolving section of a New York theater used mainly, I believe, for sending furniture to the rear where it can be removed. In other words, it is easier to strike and set at every performance than to use the small area provided by the revolving platform.

The Goodman Theater of the Chicago Art Institute has a full equipment of wagon stages to facilitate speedy changes of setting. They have served admirably in preventing breaks in the continuity of a Shakespearean presentation. Unless it has an opportunity to go behind the scenes, the audience is ordinarily not aware of the convenience of this mechanical device; in fact, unless it notices the slight inclined plane rising behind the front of the stage to meet the edge of the nearest platforms it may not know that any unusual equipment is being used.

The decision between having a curved plaster dome or unimpeded space above the stage is often a difficult one to make, for so much may be said in favor of either arrangement. Some domes have almost ruined the stages

they were intended to beautify. The many-ton dome, supposed to be movable, has already been described (page 95). Attempting to color the plaster before applying it has been risky also. It is likely to dry in exactly the wrong shade, thereby increasing all the lighting problems.

All the space above the Cleveland Play House stage is unencumbered, yet in performances all the effects of a cyclorama may be obtained. A large stretch of the rear wall was plastered, three men working upon the various sections at the same time in order that in drying no visible jointures in the surface should be left. When the wall surface, as here, is high enough and wide enough to meet all demands, this solution seems to be the best.

Mechanical conveniences are multiplying rapidly. In the Yale Theater a telephone may be attached to the back of any seat. A long cord may be plugged in on either the right or the left side. This telephone makes it possible for the director to communicate from any part of the auditorium to the stage; he may thus give directions without interrupting the delivery of the lines. Another phone in the observation booth at the rear of the balcony also communicates with the stage. Other playhouses have amplifiers in dressing rooms and various other places so that announcements of acts, scenes, etc., may be heard by every person concerned.

The stage and seating of the indoor theater at Bennett School, Millbrook, New York, designed by Charles Rann Kennedy make possible many different methods of production. The stage is furnished with a plaster cyclorama

and a set of curtains. The orchestra section of the auditorium floor is left bare for the production of Greek plays. The altar is removable. With the fixed seating, four hundred seven persons may be accommodated; with the orchestra covered, seven hundred fifty persons. To right and left of the proscenium opening are doors with small balconies above them. (See page 47.)

Little theater tournaments—district, state, and nation-wide—are no longer novelties.

One of the best small "circuits" in the non-commercial field is that of the North Shore Guild operating from Evanston, Illinois. It plays in six different towns.

Several years ago, the following announcement in a program would have been a startling novelty. Today it is a typical and material proof of the assured permanence of the independent theater.

"Interest outstanding First Mortgage seven percent Gold Notes of Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré will cease and the notes will be called on July 1, 1928. Holders of these bonds will please present them . . . for payment of par and accrued interest."

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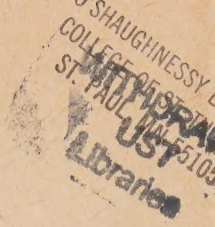

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